

Plenary Session C: Ministerial Panels

Panel 2: The contribution of renewable energies in meeting the climate challenge

Friday, 4 June, 10.35 – 12.00 h

Venue: Plenary Hall IKBB

Internationale Konferenz
für Erneuerbare Energien, Bonn
International Conference
for Renewable Energies, Bonn



STATEMENT

Margaret Beckett

Secretary of State, Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, United Kingdom

1. Thank you. I agree wholeheartedly with what Chancellor Schroeder said yesterday – that climate change is the biggest threat to our environment that we face, and that its implications are such that we need to act now to tackle both its causes as well as its effects.
2. All countries need to act if we are to move towards a low carbon future – the vision set out in the UK's Energy White Paper. And renewable energy has, we think, a key role to play in delivering this vision.
3. The IEA has estimated that there will need to be \$16 trillion worth of investment in the energy sector between now and 2030. It is vital that a significant proportion of that investment is used to expand the global market for renewable energy reflecting the contribution it can make both to achieving our environmental goals, and to ensuring secure supplies of energy.
4. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, you will recall, made very clear that a transformation of unprecedented scale and urgency is required to harness the potential both of renewable energy and of energy efficiency. It will be very difficult to meet the national and international climate goals we have set ourselves without the faster market growth than should result from the UN climate process or from any existing combination of national and international programmes – and partnerships such as REEEP, to which I referred yesterday, are now in place to help deliver that growth.
5. In the UK, we are particularly conscious the need to invest in renewable energy because after decades of North Sea oil and gas, within a few years the UK will again cease to be self-sufficient in energy.

6. Expanding the market for renewables also represents an outstanding investment opportunity. There is potential to create jobs in related manufacturing, service and supply sectors and to improve export capabilities. Already more than 8,000 people are employed in the renewables sector in the UK, and that could rise to 35,000 by 2020.
7. I am pleased to say that a number of key players in the UK energy market share my confidence. Centrica plans to invest £750m in renewables and RWE Innogy are attracting £400m of private investment: encouraging signs of investor confidence.
8. As our Prime Minister said in his address yesterday, in the UK we have set as our first goal obtaining 10% of our electricity from renewable sources by 2010, with the aspiration of doubling this by 2020 – and we are starting from a low base. We see wind energy, as the form of renewable energy with by far the best immediate prospects for growth in the UK, as playing a very big part in this expansion.
9. Through capital and research grants, we are also encouraging the development of other forms of renewable energy. £66 million has been allocated to develop markets for biomass in heat and electricity generation, photovoltaics, wave and tidal energy, to create a more diversified renewable energy sector in the longer term.
10. We will be using the opportunities of our EU and G8 Presidencies in 2005 to promote our vision and aspiration for a global low carbon economy.
11. We should not forget the vital role that energy efficiency also has to play. In the UK, we are looking to energy efficiency to deliver half of the emission reductions we are seeking in the period up to 2020 – a step change in energy efficiency on a scale not achieved before in the UK. So we believe that a low carbon economy is an achievable goal and we think that energy efficiency and renewables have a major role to play. We believe too that that is not only better for the UK's and the world's climate, it is also good for the UK's and the world's economy.