

International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) to be founded in 2009

Global challenges demand global solutions rather than go-it-alone efforts: energy security, environmental protection and the eradication of poverty can only be effectively tackled through concerted efforts at international level. Renewable energies have a key role to play. In view of climate change and the growing scarcity of conventional resources their increased use is an absolute must. The Federal Government therefore launched an initiative to found an International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) with the aim of accelerating the expansion of renewables around the world.

No international organization yet exists whose principal objective is to advise and assist industrialized nations and developing countries in the endeavour to develop renewable energies. This is precisely what IRENA will do. One of its main tasks will be to help its members develop the political framework conditions needed to promote renewable energy.

Following the successful Preparatory Conference in April and the workshops on 30 June and 1 July 2008 in Berlin, the Spanish Government invited participants to a Final Preparatory Conference in Madrid on 23 and 24 October. At this event, the 150 or so representatives from 51 states reached agreement on IRENA's Statute (treaty text) and financing modalities. They also agreed to establish a Preparatory Commission so that the Agency can get off to a swift start in the phase between the signing of the Statute and its entry into force. They likewise agreed on criteria and procedures for selecting an interim Director-General and interim headquarters. Nothing more stands in the way of the IRENA's foundation. The great interest evinced in particular by emerging economies and developing countries shows how important the expansion of renewable energy is for the sustainable supply of energy worldwide.

We are now within reach of our final goal. The Statute will be signed by the participating states at the Founding Conference in Bonn on 26 January 2009, thereby establishing IRENA. The first meeting of the Preparatory Commission will take place in Bonn on the very next day, 27 January. IRENA will thus start its work without delay and will be able to implement its first projects while still in this initial phase. In mid-2009, the interim headquarters and interim Director-General will be selected and the organization will thereafter be assembled step by step.

IRENA's prime objective is to foster the widespread and sustainable use of renewable energy around the world. This broad aim finds expression in a number of concrete activities. These include:

- Improving political framework conditions for renewable energy by means of customized political consultancy;
- Promoting the transfer of knowledge and technology in the field of renewable energy;
- Supporting capacity building in the field of renewable energy.

Above and beyond this, the Agency will advise the member states on financing options, perform ancillary public relations work and strengthen applied policy research. The hope is that membership will be as broad as possible, with equal representation of industrialized and developing countries. IRENA will cooperate closely with existing networks and organizations.

Further information on the Federal Government's initiative to establish IRENA can be found at www.irena.org.