

Climate Change and Energy Access

International Parliamentary Hearing

for West African Legislators

September 20th-21st 2008, Volta Hotel, Akosombo, Ghana

Co-sponsored by the World Future Council

Summary report

Eighteen legislators from the West Africa region met for an international parliamentary hearing in Akosombo, Ghana, and after two days of deliberations and questioning of international energy experts, they agreed unanimously on a declaration urging ECOWAS to initiate a feasibility study for a rapid shift to renewable energy and the construction of a high voltage direct current grid between West African countries. They see this as a necessary measure to increase energy self-sufficiency and counter the rising prices of fossil fuels, the negative impacts of climate change in the region, and the lack of energy access for the poorest communities.

To read the Akosombo Declaration please click [here](#)

At the hearing, members of parliament from Ghana, Mali, Benin, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Burkina Faso heard presentations from a range of experts in the fields of renewable energy and rural electrification. It became clear that clean renewable sources of energy, especially solar and wind, could provide enough power for the whole region. The technologies needed have already been developed – all that is required is the political will and the necessary investments. Much emphasis was given to the role of MPs in taking decisive action and championing good ideas in their parliaments.



The Akosombo Dam viewed from the Volta Hotel.

The MPs expressed strong concerns about the negative impacts of climate change and pointed out that African countries are likely to be particularly hard hit given the rapid expansion of deserts and the high levels of poverty amongst their populations. Climate change will cause water stress, severe droughts and extreme weather events, which are likely to lead to insecurity in food production, loss of biodiversity and sea level rises resulting in the loss of coastal zones.

The hearing stimulated lively discussions regarding the alternatives available to mitigate these impacts, the suitability of the various renewable energy options available to countries in West Africa, and the best legal and regulatory frameworks to expedite such solutions.

The parliamentarians were particularly enthused by the potential of solar thermal power in the West Africa region. If this potential is tapped – along with that of other technologies such as wind and biomass from agricultural waste – West Africa could radically reduce and in the longer term entirely eliminate the need for expensive fossil fuel imports to supply its power.

MPs were also very interested in the experiences of other African countries – like Kenya and Mauritius – which have both implemented a German-style Feed-In Tariff policy to encourage investment in the renewables sector. Ghana has also set an example with a unique Self-Help Electrification Programme to help extend the electricity grid to poor rural areas.

At the end of the hearing, the legislators agreed that urgent action is needed to tackle the growing energy crisis. They adopted a declaration calling on ECOWAS to initiate a feasibility study to assess the potential for establishing a West African Renewable Energy Community and examining the possibility of constructing a high voltage direct current grid through which the solar and wind energy resources in the north of the West African region could provide a clean and cost-effective source of electricity for the entire region.

The e-Parliament was asked to coordinate the further promotion of this initiative.

This report is divided into five sections:

1. Participants
2. Action Ideas Discussed
3. Follow-up Actions
4. About the e-Parliament and the World Future Council
5. The Akosombo Declaration



Legislators, experts and members of the e-Parliament team at Akosombo.

1. Participants

Members of Parliament

Hon. Falade Ajibade, Parliament of Nigeria. Member, Power Committee.

Hon. Dr. Kwame Ampofo MP, Parliament of Ghana. Member, Committee of Energy and Mines. Member, e-Parliament council.

Hon. Julie Azumah-Mensah, Parliament of Ghana.

Hon. Akua Dansua, Parliament of Ghana. Executive Director of Energy Committee.

Hon. Dieudonné Maurice Bonanet, Parliament of Burkina Faso.

Hon. Kalifa Doumbia, Parliament of Mali. Vice President, Committee on Energy; President, Ghana-Mali Parliamentary Friendship Group

Hon. Faseyi Samuel Duro, Parliament of Nigeria. Chair, Environment Committee.

Hon. Quenum Epiphane, Parliament of Benin. Chair of Production, Equipment and Climate Committee.

Hon. Barazé Haoua, Parliament of Niger.

Hon. Massek Gueye, Parliament of Senegal. Member Natural Disaster Committee.

Hon. Ahmed Idris, Parliament of Nigeria. Member, Environment Committee.

Hon. Dr. Bernadette Lahai, Parliament of Sierra Leone. Chair, African Parliamentarian Network on Climate Change, Sierra Leone Chapter.

Hon. Ibrahim Mahaman, Parliament of Niger.

Hon. Stanislas Benewinde Sankara, Parliament of Burkina Faso. Leader of UNIR-MS – Opposition Party

Hon. Ismaël Tidjani-Serpos, Parliament of Benin.

Hon. Norbert Tiendrebeogo, Parliament of Burkina Faso. Leader of the FFS – Opposition Party

Hon. Djire Pinda Traoré, Parliament of Mali. Member, Committee on Energy.

Hon. Albert Taminu Sam Tsokwa, Parliament of Nigeria. Member, Environment Committee.

Hon. Moussa Zangaou, Parliament of Niger. Chair, Parliamentary Network on the Environment.

Hon. Abdou Djariri, Parliament of Niger.

Expert Presenters

Harriette Amissah-Arthur, Director, Kumasi Institute of Technology, Energy and Environment (KITE)

Alfred Ahenkorah, Executive Secretary of the Ghana Energy Commission. Executive Director of the Energy Foundation.

Francis Gbeddy, Director, Natural Gas, Power and Renewable Energy, Ghana Energy Commission

Dr. Gerhard Knies, Physicist, Coordinator, Trans-Mediterranean Renewable Energy Cooperation (TREC)

David Jacobs, Policy Action on Climate Toolkit (PACT) project, World Future Council

Pierre Dembele, Mali Folkecentre

e-Parliament Staff

James Corre, Programme Officer, e-Parliament

Jesper Grolin, Executive Director, e-Parliament

Susana Guerreiro, Programme Officer, e-Parliament



The Director of the Akosombo Dam explaining how climate change has reduced the level of water in Lake Volta. 2007 saw the lowest recorded water level ever.

2. Action Ideas Discussed

Before the hearing started, the participants visited the Akosombo Hydro Power Dam, built in the 1960s. The director of the dam explained how the plant operates and showed how the energy supply from the dam has fluctuated over time. This was of particular interest to MPs from Benin, a country that is highly dependent on energy exports from the Akosombo dam.

The tour generated some discussion about the impacts of such projects, which in the case of Akosombo caused the submersion of nearly 740 villages, displaced about 80 000 people and brought an increased number of malaria cases and other diseases to the region. The Akosombo Dam was a reliable source of energy for Ghana and neighbouring countries in the first decades after its construction, but in the 1980s and 1990s low water levels caused by

droughts brought a halt to energy exports. Due to climate change, 2007 saw the lowest water level ever recorded in the lake.

This information stimulated some questions about the sustainability of such projects, and the MPs heard that, in the opinion of the director of the Akosombo dam, the current context of rapid climate change should stimulate other countries to consider alternative means of generating electricity rather than replicating the large dam model.

Jesper Grolin, the e-Parliament's Executive Director, opened the hearing by emphasising the interdependence between northern and southern countries in the fight to minimise and control climate change and preserve fragile ecosystems. African countries have contributed the least to the current climate change threat, but they are likely to be hit the hardest, especially the poorest people.

Food production is already suffering from severe changes in the climate and many coastal areas are in serious danger of being submerged. Development is a key priority for Africa, and that will require more energy. Given the constant rise in the price of fossil fuels, it is crucial to find alternatives. Fortunately, there is no shortage of renewable energy solutions, and African countries are blessed with several plentiful sources of renewable energy that can take the region out of the carousel of ever spiralling oil and coal prices. It is simply a matter of political will to take action.

Pierre Dembélé, representing e-Parliament's regional partner, the Mali Folkecenter, pointed out that energy access is an international priority and one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Africa has a great potential of renewable sources of energy, but the tapping of their potential is still at a very early stage, especially due to lack of financial support and adequate legislation. Mr.



The legislators listening to a presentation at Akosombo.

Dembele highlighted the role of the MPs in reversing the heavy dependence on fossil fuels and in mitigating the impacts of climate change.

Kwame Ampofo, a Ghanaian MP and member of the e-Parliament's International Council, spoke about Ghana's situation with regard to climate change and pointed out that an increase of temperature of 1°C and rainfall reductions of 20-30% have already been observed, and that sea level rise will affect low-lying wetlands – in particular in the Volta Delta, where about 1,000 km² of land may be lost. Climate Change will also affect energy production from hydro

resources, as happened in the Akosombo Dam in 2007, and will increase tropical diseases such as malaria.

Climate Change and its Impacts on West Africa:

Dr. Bernadette Lahai, an MP from Sierra Leone, presented a paper prepared by Dr. Ogunlade Davidson of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The presentation offered an overview of the current and projected impacts of climate change. The panel's findings show that all greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions continue to increase – especially carbon dioxide, which is by far the largest contributor to global warming – and this makes a certain degree of future warming inevitable.



Bernadette Lahai of Sierra Leone explaining that there is an urgent need to decouple economic growth from increased greenhouse gas emissions.

The IPCC 4th Assessment Report points out that climate change can be attributed to man-made activities and predicts that with the current, inadequate climate change mitigation policies, global GHG emissions will continue to grow over the next few decades. The report maintains that mitigation of climate change is still possible, but changes are needed both in lifestyles and behaviour patterns as well as in broader development policies, such as economic instruments that provide incentives for investments in low-emission industries and products.

Even though the CO₂ contributions of most African countries are very small compared to developed countries, the challenge of securing economic

growth while limiting negative effects on the climate needs to be addressed by African MPs, who urgently need to find means of decoupling economic growth from increased GHG emissions.

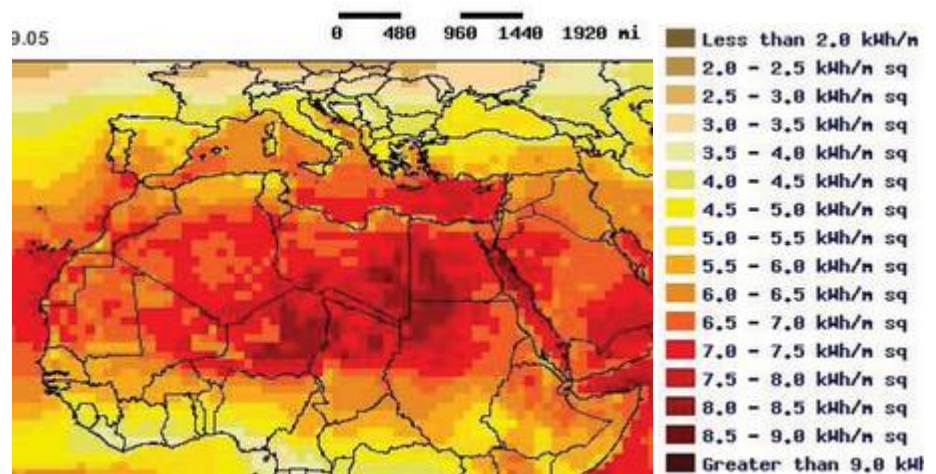
Renewable Energy Options:

Dr. Gerhard Knies, physicist and coordinator of the Trans-Mediterranean Renewable Energy Cooperation (TREC) initiative, introduced a range of renewable energy options available to legislators and industry in West Africa.

He started by pointing out that the issue of climate change needs to be addressed from a security perspective rather than focussing only efficiency and economy. West Africa is a region in transition and in need of more energy. Renewable sources has the potential of meeting the growing demand for energy in the region despite growing populations, and the technology required to do so is proven and readily available.

Dr Knies went on to address the technological options that could contribute to meeting all of West Africa's energy needs without any additional carbon emissions and highlighted in particular the region's potential for solar thermal and wind power.

Solar thermal power, or concentrating solar power (CSP), uses mirrors to concentrate sunlight, heating water or other liquids and producing high-temperature steam that can drive turbines and thereby power



A map showing solar radiation in North Africa. Solar power is sufficiently strong in Mali and Niger for the countries to provide power for the whole region.

conventional electricity generators. Among solar technologies, CSP is the cheapest, and also holds the potential of becoming the largest bulk producer of solar electricity. And because CSP uses a thermal phase, the energy generated can be stored as heat – in the form of molten salt – so that generation of energy can take place not only during the day when the sun shines, but also at night.

Dr. Knies demonstrated how solar power from deserts could provide enough energy to power the whole world. In fact, only two weeks of sun from deserts would be the equivalent to all conventional oil reserves, known and expected. And using maps and detailed data analysis, he also demonstrated how sun from sub-Saharan countries like Niger and Mali could power the entire West African region.

Wind power has also proven to be a reliable source of energy in some parts of the region. The northern part of Mali and the northeast of Niger have shown good average wind speeds, and the west-Sahara region registers particularly good wind speed levels – making it the best place in the region to explore the use of this resource.

Dr. Knies explained that to connect the northern parts of West Africa to the populous coastal areas, High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) transmission lines would have to be built from desert power stations in order to ensure minimum wastage in the transmission of the electricity from source to end-user. HVDC lines entail a power loss of only 3 percent over each 1000-kilometre stretch – significantly lower than traditional alternating current lines.

As shown in the table, Dr. Knies suggested how cooperation between the ECOWAS countries could be organised in order to guarantee a steady supply throughout the region, and he suggested that the MPs present recommend the formation of an ECOWAS clean energy community.

The idea of an ECOWAS clean energy community met with positive reactions from the

parliamentarians, who recognised the enormous potential of renewable energy in the region. Some countries such as Niger and Burkina Faso have tried to launch pilot projects in solar power, but without much success. Hon. Ismaël-Serpos of Benin stressed that his country is highly dependent on countries like Ghana for its electricity supply, and since the Akosombo Dam is producing ever less power, alternatives are needed.

Many of the MPs emphasised the difficulties in obtaining the necessary financial investment. Sam Tsokwa, a Nigerian MP, suggested that developed countries should invest in the region and bring the necessary technologies to harness clean energy, as they hold the most responsibility for climate change.

South – North ECOWAS DESERTEC Grid partners East – West ECOWAS grid for smoothing fluctuations	
Consumer country	Main Solar/Wind partner
Nigeria	Niger
Benin	Burkina Faso
Togo	Burkina Faso
Ghana	Burkina Faso
Ivory Coast	Mali
Liberia	Mali
Sierra Leone	Senegal/Mali
Guinea, Guinea Bissau	Senegal

The parliamentarians agreed that since ECOWAS countries can do little individually, cooperation is needed. They asked for the assistance of Dr. Knies and the e-Parliament in this process.

Creating Strong Markets for Renewable Energy

Representing the hearing’s cosponsor, the World Future Council (WFC), David Jacobs – a member of the WFC’s Policy Action on Climate Toolkit (PACT) project – made a presentation on Feed-In Tariffs (FITs).

David Jacobs started by pointing out that many renewable energy sources are already cheaper than their fossil fuel equivalents when viewed over the long term, and that the main obstacle to their adoption is their high initial capital cost. Therefore, there is a need for a consistent legal framework to encourage investment and guarantee returns to investors within a reasonable timeframe.

To achieve this, different mechanisms can be used – including tax incentives, subsidies and tendering schemes – but the Feed-in-tariff scheme has been shown to be the most effective. Feed-In Tariffs oblige utility companies to purchase electricity generated from renewable sources at a premium rate, which is guaranteed over a certain number of years. By guaranteeing



Julie Amisah-Mensah of Ghana making a point.

renewable energy producers access to the grid and setting a favourable price per unit of power, FITs ensure that renewable energy becomes a stable, sound and long-term investment.

There are two ways of financing FITs. The cost of the FIT can be shared by all energy users in the form of a small charge on each consumer's electricity bill. The price for each consumer will be minimal – coming to approximately €1.50 per month for each household in Germany, for example. Alternatively, FITs can be financed through a national fund or state budget. This option relieves the consumer of an extra charge on the electricity bill, which may be especially important in African countries, where the electricity price is already far beyond what many of the poorest people can afford.

Extension of the grid to reach everyone is often not economically viable in West African countries, and the Feed-In Tariff model might be adapted to support mini-grid or off-grid sources, especially in communities located far away from the national grid.

The German FIT, which has led to the rapid development of both the wind and solar photovoltaic (PV) industries, offers a tariff of 9 euro cents per kilowatt hour for wind and 56 cents per kilowatt hour for PV (prices paid vary according to location). The German feed-in tariff has resulted in massive investment in renewable energy, over 40 million tonnes of CO₂ have been saved, and 250,000 new jobs have created.

To illustrate how FITs have already been applied in African countries, David Jacobs mentioned the case of the Mauritius FIT for cogeneration of sugar and electricity from bagasse (a waste product of growing sugar cane), which has provided an opportunity to diversify the industry's income generation. He also spoke of Kenyan legislation that combines several renewable technologies (wind, biomass and hydro) under a FIT scheme.



Bareze Haoua MP of Niger sitting next to the e-Parliament's James Corre and Kwame Ampofo from Ghana.

He discussed how MPs can search for best practices around the world regarding FIT and demonstrated to some

of the parliamentarians how they can draft their own FIT proposal online through the Policy Action on Climate Toolkit (PACT) website (www.onlinepact.org).

To further assist MPs in promoting FITs, the e-Parliament circulated two toolkits analysing the German and Spanish experiences with FITs and provided copies of the legislation recently passed in Kenya to provide an example of how such policies can be implemented in the African context.

Reaching out to the Margins

Francis Gbeddy, Director of Natural Gas, Power and Renewable Energy at the Ghana Energy Commission, presented his country's unique self-help scheme for expanding the grid and for electrification of rural areas.

The Self Help Electrification Programme (SHEP) is a complementary electrification programme instituted to support Ghana's National Electrification Programme (NEP). SHEP offers those communities initiating their own electrification projects government help to complete the electrification process earlier than the scheduled date of connection under the NEP. The



Francis Gbeddy of the Ghana Energy Commission explaining how the self-help scheme has increased access to the grid from 10 percent to 54 percent in less than 20 years.

communities must procure and erect all the low-voltage electricity poles required for the local network, as well as paying for all wiring of households.

Once communities have completed these steps and provided evidence that a minimum of one third of the households in the community are wired and ready to receive electricity, the SHEP scheme completes the process by connecting the community to the national grid via the pre-installed poles. A fixed low charge based on 150 kWh consumption per month provides an effective subsidy enabling poorer households to connect to the scheme. Those who exceed 150 kWh have to pay the full price for each kWh used. This pricing structure, which serves both to extend access and encourage energy efficiency simultaneously, is known as a 'lifeline tariff'.

The SHEP scheme – which is funded by a consortium of foreign banks and development agencies – is a broad collaborative effort including local stakeholders, government ministries, district assemblies, energy companies, contractors and independent energy consultants. The combined NEP and SHEP programmes have been highly effective: grid access has been raised from 10% to 54% of the population in less than 20 years. The success of SHEP has been such that it has now superseded the NEP's rural provisions as the primary means of extending the national grid into rural areas.

The current (fourth) stage of the project has so far has electrified more than 2500 communities; Francis Gbeddy also spoke about the next steps and the need to incorporate renewable technologies into the rural electrification strategy. Recognising that grid extension is not always the best option, particularly for more sparsely populated areas, Mr. Gbeddy ended by discussing how the lessons of SHEP might be applied to support off-grid electrification using wind, solar and mini-hydro. Some communities that were being provided with off-grid solar energy have complained that they were getting substandard energy at a higher price than mainstream grid users. This emphasises the need to implement a uniform

pricing strategy with respect to on- and off-grid supply.

At the hearing, MPs also had the privilege of hearing Dr. Alfred Ahenkorah – the Executive Secretary of the Ghana Energy Commission and Executive Director of the Energy Foundation – who spoke about promoting energy efficiency measures within industry.

Dr. Ahenkorah started by talking about existing barriers to energy efficiency in small and medium enterprises (SMEs), such as the financial barriers (efficient technologies are often more expensive), limited technical expertise, lack of awareness, and institutional barriers (lack of structures charging specific individuals with the promotion of energy efficiency). This has led to the creation of an organisation to champion energy efficiency. The Energy Foundation is a public/private partnership that promotes information dissemination on efficient production methods and technologies, local capacity-building in energy management and technical support to industry and commerce. A specialized energy diagnostic service (the 'Energy Van') travels the country, advising businesses on how to change operations to reduce peak-time energy consumption and on how to make adjustments in buildings, such as better insulation and air conditioning usage recommendations.

The Energy Foundation also works on market-promotion efforts and seeks to promote energy-efficient business through increased availability of energy-efficient technologies such as electric motors, lighting systems, boilers/furnaces and technology demonstrations. This strategy has delivered outstanding results in both the public and private sectors. To take a major project as an example, the Energy Efficiency in Public Buildings initiative was implemented with the cooperation of the Dutch government in 2002-2004, resulting in government electricity savings of US\$148,000 per annum.

Another significant project was the 2007 Efficient Lighting Initiative by which six million incandescent lamps were replaced by distributing free of charge 6 million compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs) to the citizens of Ghana. This project came as a response to Ghana's hydro-power crisis in 2006/2007, which was caused by climate-induced water shortages in the Akosombo Dam.

Financing Small scale Solar, Wind and Hydro Energy



Harriette Amissah-Arthur of the Kumasi Institute of Technology said that mini-grids can provide a valuable social role – providing employment and bringing communities together.

Harriette Amissah-Arthur, the Director of the Kumasi Institute of Technology (KITE), opened the second day of the hearing with a presentation on options for financing small-scale solar, wind and hydro energy. KITE is a Ghanaian non-profit organisation that promotes the deployment and delivery of sustainable energy systems through effective technologies in rural areas based on enterprise-centred approaches and empowerment of local stakeholders.

Mrs. Amissah-Arthur acknowledged the large potential for renewable energies in the West African region, but pointed out that their viability depends

on the specific location and thus must be assessed case by case. She emphasised that Ghana, and the region in general, simply cannot afford *not* to exploit these sources of clean energy, and that since it is impossible to bring grid electricity to every part of the country - especially to small and sparsely populated rural areas – part of the solution has to be more investment in mini-grids. Off-grid mini power plants generate local economic activity where they are installed, reduce dependence on utilities, bring communities together, build a sense of ownership, and promote more efficient use of energy.

Mrs. Amissah-Arthur introduced the African Rural Energy Enterprise Development (AREED) programme, established eight years ago to provide innovative financing mechanisms to support renewable energy development whilst increasing local economic activity. With funding from international agencies like SIDA and the German government, AREED provides entrepreneurs with seed capital and/or second stage finance in various forms (loans and/or equity).

In addition, the programme offers technical assistance and training to help entrepreneurs start and develop an energy business. Nevertheless, the speaker emphasised the need to move from these types of financing mechanisms towards mainstream solutions, encouraging investments from commercial financial institutions such as private banks. She closed by underlining the important role of legislators in designing policies that promote entrepreneurship and champion good ideas such as the AREED programme.

The Bio-energy Conundrum: Biomass, Biogas and Biofuels

The last presentation was given by Pierre Dembélé of the Mali Folkecenter – e-Parliament’s partner organisation in West Africa – who focused on ways of producing bioenergy using technologies such as biomass-fired electric power plants/CHP, liquid fuels (e.g bioethanol and biofuel) and biogas production technology.



Pierre Dembele of the Mali Folkecenter said that small-scale production of biofuel using jatropha was something that legislators should consider.

He enumerated a number of important advantages of using bioenergy in Africa, including the wide availability of these resources, the possibility to convert them into all the major energy carriers (electricity, gases, liquid fuel, heat), the environmental benefits of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and the improvement in livelihoods of rural peoples that these sources of energy can generate.

As for biogas (i.e. the energy produced from anaerobic fermentation of organic waste), the successful case of cogeneration of sugar cane and electricity in Mauritius was discussed. This cogeneration has protected Mauritius against high oil price increases, provided an alternative revenue

stream for the country's key sugar industry, and generated jobs.

The production in Mali of biofuel from the jatropha plant was also mentioned. This plant was first used by communities to produce soap and then to power milling machines in a project that ceased to operate in 1996 because jatropha oil became more expensive than diesel. Recently, however, biofuel from the jatropha plant has been used for rural electrification in areas where electrification projects do not work because people cannot pay the electricity bills. The "Garalo Rural Electrification Project" has helped 10,000 people by providing a mini-grid about 15km in scope, which will supply clean energy for 15 years for local SME development – leading to job creation and an extra income for local people by means of the collection and sale of jatropha seeds.

According to the Mali Folkecenter it is important to promote small-scale production of jatropha for local electricity generation and for the benefit of the local communities. Mr. Dembele warned, however, that if the objective becomes production for export, there is a danger that biofuels could take over land currently cultivated for food production, thus increasing food prices.

According to Pierre Dembélé, Mali has many good reasons to produce biofuels, including the need to diversify energy sources, decrease exposure to the price volatility of the international oil market, and ensure rural development. However, the government needs to conduct thorough research to assess the viability of such projects, define clearly the objectives of using biofuels and implement policies and legislation for their sustainable use.



Legislators from Niger discuss the e-Parliament's Akosombo Declaration.

3. Follow up Actions

After thorough discussions of the negative impacts of climate change in the region and considering at the same time the huge potential for production of renewable energy in the West African region as well as the need to increase energy consumption in order to achieve economic development and combat poverty, the MPs present agreed that urgent action needs to be taken at a regional level to promote the production and exchange of different sources renewable energy. A declaration was drafted and signed by all parliamentarians recommending that the ECOWAS parliament undertake a feasibility study for a possible West African Renewable Energy Community and the establishment of a West Africa supergrid connecting all countries in the region. (See Akosombo Declaration at the end of this document).

Concluding the final day of the hearing, Kwame Ampofo, Ghanaian MP and member of the e-Parliament's International Council, asked the MPs present to assess their countries' current situations in terms of climate change impacts and energy policies and to share with the group their plans for action, considering the alternatives that were presented to them during the hearing.

Nigeria



Sam Tsokwa MP, stated that some options discussed during the hearing are already in place in Nigeria, namely mini-hydro and small-scale projects using solar energy to power street lights.

In terms of plans for action, he outlined the need to create a legislative framework to safeguard the independence of power providers, using a German-style FIT. The Nigerian MP said that there are currently two bills passing through parliament. One dealt with desertification, the other with climate change. Both would be discussed in a public hearing. The e-Parliament was asked for assistance to help move forward actions to combat climate change.

Benin



Epiphane Quenum MP mentioned that Benin is already in the process of experimenting with renewable energies. He said that poverty reduction is essential in his country and that energy is a key means to achieve that. Given that mainstream electricity suppliers are not able to meet current demand, Benin needs to consider alternatives, and he will call on his government for reflection to find solutions to the energy problem. Mr. Quenum expressed a resolve to follow up on the ECOWAS declaration signed at the hearing, assuring that the 5 MPs from Benin represented at the ECOWAS parliament will give this proposal their full support.

Burkina Faso



Norbert Tiendrebeogo MP expressed concern about his country's current energy situation at a time when hydro dams no longer generate sufficient power to meet current needs. He noted that this created a need to construct solar power stations in the country. He also highlighted the importance of cultivating plants

like jatropha to promote local development and economic activity, as demonstrated in the project for rural electrification conducted in Mali.

Sierra Leone



Bernadette Lahai MP started by pointing out that her country has no overall energy policy and no coordination in terms of energy priorities. Several studies have been commissioned, but the drafts have not yet been passed from the minister to the parliament. Thus, her first act will be to champion in parliament the existing draft bill, and she requested e-Parliament to help in organising pre-legislative hearings on that bill. She also emphasised the need for building capacity amongst her MP colleagues. The attrition rate in Sierra Leone's parliament has been very high, and with a constant change of legislators many of them are not aware of the environmental and energy problems the country faces. So her second point of action will be to start-up two committees – an Energy Committee at a national level and an African Energy Network.

Senegal



Masseck Gueye MP noted that Senegal has a Rural Development Agency that wishes to electrify all rural areas by 2015, but the problem is that the country cannot afford current fossil fuel prices. The Senegalese MP had no doubt that the solution was to be found in the renewable energy sector – especially in sources of power like sun and wind - but in order to implement these clean sources of energy, a renewable energy policy has to be formulated. He believes political will is emerging and mentioned the example of a village of 800 people that recently received solar power electrification. However, he emphasised that much more needs to be done.

Mali



Djire Pinda Traoré MP expressed his support for the recommendation to be sent to the ECOWAS parliament and said he would champion it in parliament. As a future plan for action, the Malian MP revealed an interest in replicating Ghana's policies on energy efficiency as presented at the hearing.

Niger



Moussa Zangaou MP conveyed his intention to personally meet the speaker of the National Assembly as well as the speaker of the ECOWAS parliament in order to move the signed recommendation forward. He stressed that solar energy is Niger's priority as the country already has its own solar energy policy, but he said that the efficiency of the technology still needs to be demonstrated. One of his follow-up actions will be to ensure that there will be a session in parliament to raise awareness amongst MPs and the general public on the climate and energy issue. Mr. Zangaou also feels the need to create real synergies between MPs, namely those in the Energy and Environment Committees, and to involve civil society, as he believes this will help to achieve positive results.



In closing, Kwame Ampofo emphasised the crucial role of legislators, noting that law is the only tool that can break market barriers. Thus, the active participation

of all MPs and the formulation of solid policies are essential in order to instigate real change and to address the climate issue while providing abundant clean energy to the West African people, reducing poverty and enabling economic growth.



Akua Dansua MP (Ghana), Kalifa Doumbia MP (Mali), Faseyi Duro MP (Nigeria), Bareze Haoua MP (Nigeria), Ahmed Idris MP (Nigeria), Julie Azumah-Mensah MP (Ghana), Stanislas Sankara MP (Burkina Faso) and Ismael Tidjani-Serpos MP (Benin). Dieudonne Bonanet MP (Burkina Faso), Ibrahim Mahaman MP (Niger), and Abdou Djariri MP (Niger) also attended the hearing.

4. On the e-Parliament and the World Future Council

The e-Parliament is a new global forum in which democratic national legislators work together to exchange and implement good policy ideas. It is led by an international Council of members of Parliament and Congress. We are combining the new communications technologies with face-to-face meetings to apply at the global level some of the methods of a national Parliament. For more information on the e-Parliament please visit our website at www.e-parl.net.

The World Future Council (WFC) aims for a global membership of wise thinkers, practical pioneers and young leaders. It will identify the "implementation gaps" between current practices and necessary measures to assure a sustainable and equitable world. As an institution representing humanity's common values, the WFC will provide an ongoing forum for debate and action. For further information please see our website at www.worldfuturecouncil.org/.

5. Acknowledgement



Sida

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The Akosombo Declaration

An e-Parliament Recommendation for a West African Renewable Energy Community

Eighteen West African parliamentarians gathered on September 20th - 21st 2008 in Akosombo, Ghana for an international parliamentary hearing on Climate Change and Energy Access organised by the e-Parliament. After expert presentations and discussions, they agreed that:

1. The West Africa region is rich in renewable energy resources, especially solar and wind energy. The areas in the vicinity of the Sahara have the potential to produce enough solar and wind energy to serve the rest of the sub-region. Satellite data provided by the UNEP program SWERA (Solar and Wind Energy Resource Assessment) show that this potential of the northern ECOWAS region is in large excess of current and projected demands of all ECOWAS countries.
2. In view of the growing energy demand in the ECOWAS region and the growing scarcity and mounting costs of fossil fuels, solar and wind energy potentials in the north of the ECOWAS region have become of crucial interest in the quest for a source of secure, clean, inexhaustible, affordable and cost-effective electricity supply for the entire region. This provides an attractive opportunity for a sustainable energy future for West Africa.
3. The West African Power Pool (WAPP) and the common ECOWAS energy protocol could be instrumental in making these resources accessible to the more densely populated southern ECOWAS countries. Here the low-loss high voltage direct current (HVDC) transmission technology is of particular interest.
4. Suitable renewable energy technologies, such as concentrating solar thermal power (CSP) and wind power are mature and proven technologies. An increasing number of the required technical components could be produced in the region, and could contribute to regional industrial development and intraregional cooperation.

A FEASIBILITY STUDY

The option for a future secure and clean energy supply to the ECOWAS countries is at hand, but there are a number of issues to be clarified before this concept can be recommended to our governments for implementation. Questions relevant to technical, economic, financial and political feasibility and to the best locations for solar and wind resources need to be investigated in a coherent and comprehensive study by appropriate experts.

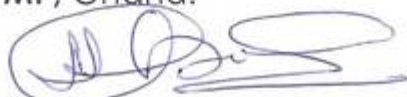
Taking the above into consideration, the assembled parliamentarians agreed to recommend that the potential benefits and the expected costs and challenges of the proposed concept of a West African Renewable Energy Community be investigated in a feasibility study. In view of increasing global and regional energy and climate challenges the parliamentarians propose that ECOWAS commissions this investigation as a matter of highest priority.

List of Signatories

Hon. Dr. Kwame Ampofo MP,
Ghana.

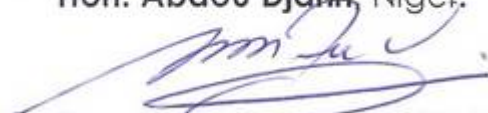


Hon. Julie Azumah-Mensah
MP, Ghana.

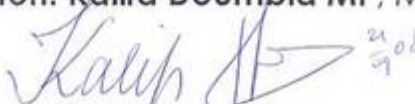


Hon. Akua Dansua MP,
Ghana.

Hon. Abdou Djariri, Niger.



Hon. Kalifa Doumbia MP, Mali.



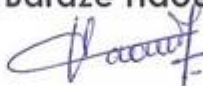
Hon. Faseyi Samuel Duro MP,
Nigeria.



Hon. Quenum Epiphane MP,
Benin.



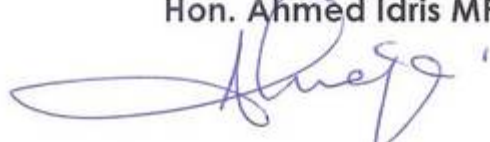
Hon. Barazé Haoua MP, Niger.



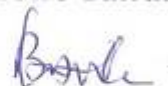
Hon. Masseck Gueye MP,
Senegal.



Hon. Ahmed Idris MP, Nigeria.



Hon. Dr. Bernadette Lahai MP,
Sierra Leone.



Hon. Ibrahim Mahaman MP,
Niger.



Hon. Stanislas Benewinde
Sankara MP, Burkina Faso.



Hon. Ismaël Tidjani Serpos MP,
Benin.



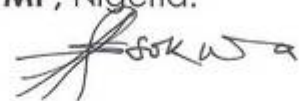
Hon. Norbert Tiendrebeogo,
Burkina Faso.



Hon. Djire Pinda Traoré MP,
Mali.



Hon. Albert Taminu Sam-
Tsokwa MP, Nigeria.



Hon. Moussa Zangaou MP,
Parliament of Niger

