

Historic moment generates momentum for shift to 100% Renewable Energy

The 100% Renewable for 1.5 °C

Introduction

The COP22 Presidency and the Climate Vulnerable Forum hosted a first in its kind multi-stakeholder event, which gathered governments, cities, territories, businesses and civil society to pioneer the shift to 100% Renewable Energy and work to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

Supported by the United Nations Development Program and the UN Sustainable Energy for All these discussions involved representatives from the governments of Morocco, Ethiopia and Costa Rica, the City of Oslo, the Australian Capital Territory Government, Sumba Islands as well as corporations like Mars and IKEA and civil society actors.

Civil society collaborated intensively to align the influential partners that participated this meeting. Participants included: Climate Action Network, Hivos, World Future Council, The Stanley Foundation, Sierra Club, Greenpeace, local governments for sustainability (ICLEI), Christian Aid, Care, Renewable Cities, AVAAZ, Beyond Zero Emissions, IndyAct, RE 100, Climate Group, Climate Reality Project, Solutions Project, The Purpose Climate Lab, 350.org, WWF, CARE, and Track 0.

Event Outcome

Foundations for a 100% Renewable Energy (RE) movement were significantly strengthened during COP22 in Marrakech. Governments, civil society, cities, businesses, islands and other territories gathered for the first time and demonstrated the feasibility, economic viability and ethical imperative to transition to 100% RE to keep temperatures below a 1.5°C warming above pre-industrial levels.

Morocco, The Marshall Islands, the City of Oslo, Ethiopia, Indonesia's Sumba Island, Costa Rica, Australia as well as large corporations like Mars and IKEA laid out the successes and the benefits reaped from transitioning to 100% RE.

By shifting to renewables, Morocco ensured quasi complete access to electricity and education for its population and reduced migration. Sumba Island improved access to medical facilities and reduced the use of biomass. Renewables decreased electricity costs for IKEA and Mars, enhanced their investment opportunities and reduced their carbon footprint. In Costa Rica, 100 RE is generating jobs and returns on investment.

The high-level event set the stage for the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) announcement to transition to 100% RE by 2050 and ratchet up ambitions before 2020. The CVF declaration, which came on the last day of COP22, became the main outcome of the UN talks in Marrakech that were significantly overshadowed by the results of the US elections. The announcement raised hopes again that the Paris Agreement was still alive and will be implemented bumping the threat brought forward by the US elections to the international accord and the decades long negotiations. By their bold commitments, which aim to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5°C, the CVF mounted pressure on other governments to take similar action.

Background and Purpose

In the past two years, many non-state actors decided to follow a 100% RE path, including cities, territories, businesses and others. National governments worked towards a RE future as well.

Countries like India, Japan, Brazil and Morocco legislated policies and measures to boost RE over the coming 5 to 15 years. Due to the great ambition and success of Morocco in developing its RE sector, the COP22 host-country is well placed to be a renewables champion, boosting its profile on a global scale during the talks in November 2016 and beyond. Conversely 100% RE is a key element for INDCs and NAPS in the run-up to 2020. Pushing for more ambition pre-2020 both on a national and sub-national levels, including businesses, cities and islands, is important to fully prepare countries to meet their commitments under the Paris Agreement.

Recognizing this unprecedented opportunity, civil society leaders built on the power of COP22 as a platform to mainstream 100% RE and trigger adoption pledges across constituencies by demonstrating that the transition from fossil fuel dependence to renewables is achievable, economically lucrative and has added benefits in the health, education and rural development sectors.

Event Overview

For the first time, leading stakeholders from government, cities, businesses and civil society came together to demonstrate 100% RE is a key component to limit global warming to 1.5°C and showcase that the transition is already happening and is economical as well as technically feasible and viable.

After opening remarks by moderator Tzeporah Berman, President of the Marshall Islands H.E. Hilda Heine and the Moroccan ambassador to the COP22 Presidency Aziz Mekouar ensured that governments are rallying to respond to the call from the 100% RE movement. To strengthen the global momentum, the One 4 All initiative will be launched in 2017 and will bring in new forms of funding for new energy by 2030.

H.E. Heine said that beyond our responsibility as government officials, our personal roles as mothers, fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers are the main driving force behind securing a renewable energy system for future generations. Leaders agreed to protect the climate and to achieve the sustainable development goals. If these commitments are not met, there will neither be justice nor peace, said H.E. Heine. The necessary energy revolution is underway but progress is too slow, she said whilst saluting the room and the CVF for their leadership and vision.

H.E. Heine's emotional intervention was triggered by the moving performance of her daughter poet Kathy Jetnil-Kijner. She recited a poem that painfully described how her home in The Marshall Islands is slowly disappearing due to the impacts of climate change. Her performance touched upon the very core of the event: to go 100% renewable, limit global warming to 1.5°C and secure a future to the next generations.

The first panel explored the viability of going 100% RE. A wide range of stakeholders from governments, civil society, businesses, and cities together showcased that going renewable is already happening. For some such as Mr Hinggu Panjanji, Community Award winner from Sumba Island, this transition is improving livelihoods and granting better access to medical facilities, especially for children. Previously, the island inhabitants had to go through much hardship to fetch food and firewood. "100 RE is a choice, not a dream and it is happening," Panjanji said.

For businesses, the message seems quite simple “the trend is our friend”, and renewable energy is the trend, said Mars Chief Sustainability Officer (CSO) Barry Parking. Therefore going 100% RE is simply the right thing to do, said Parking, “It’s all about joining the movement.” IKEA CSO Steve Howard said that his company is relying on renewable energy since six years. it reduced utility costs whilst presenting an investment opportunity. “People like wind turbines, so no reason not to get behind them,” said Howard.

Project Manager at REScoop Stanislas D’Herbement called for increased multi-stakeholder engagement through networks. This can accelerate the transition through best practices and lessons learned sharing. Vice Mayor of Oslo, Norway Lan Marie Nguyen Berg is transitioning her city to 100% RE and already cut emissions to half. CVF Chair and State Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in Ethiopia Kare Chawicha talked about the importance of working together to be effective and ensured that CVF will continue to advocate for 1000% RE.

Chief Executive Officer of Sustainable Energy for All Rachel Kyte gave a stirring address reminding us that we must leave no one behind in the transition to a safer, fairer, 100% renewable energy system – an energy system which will eventually be for all. With commitment from civil society, this can be done, Kyte said. She congratulated the companies in the room saying they are the leaders of employment and they set an example.

The second panel focused on demonstrating that lower cost of renewable energy investment meant the time is ripe for a renewable energy transition, which is gradually helping deconstruct barriers.

The renewables sector in Costa Rica is prospering and the country is investing in smart agriculture and introduced the first carbon neutral coffee, said Costa Rica’s Minister of Agriculture H.E. Luis Felipe Arauz Cavallini.

Chair of the Scientific Committee of the COP Presidency Nizar Baraka, who gave the final keynote address, said that achieving 100% RE requires bringing several pieces together. The first thing countries need to do is set a vision, then build institutions and reform the public sector to enable it to carry out the transition. The other key elements are transfer in technology, training, research and development. Africa faces a major challenge, it doesn’t have the capacity to invest in renewable energy nor access credit for it. Costa Rica on the other hand, achieved relative success due to the availability of such financial instruments as the development bank.

Next Steps

Building on the momentum generated by the event and subsequently the CVF’s Marrakech Vision, the multi-stakeholder partnership seeks to strengthen and grow the movement even further to mainstream the vision of transition to 100% RE for 1.5°C and make it a reality.