

“Innovation as the key enabler to power Africa”



Press Release

Rome, 22 May 2017

RES4MED celebrates 5th Anniversary with a new strategic focus on innovation

ROME, May 22, 2017 – Each year, RES4MED hosts its Annual Conference in Rome gathering partners and stakeholders for a thematic dialogue on current renewable energy affairs. The 2017 Annual Conference marked RES4MED’s 5th Anniversary, which convened over 200 guests on 22 May 2017 in the Enel Auditorium. Besides looking back at 5 years RES4MED, this year’s conference focused on how innovation is impacting the energy sector’s strategic thinking on renewable energy deployment in African markets.

The conference was opened by Mr. Roberto Vigotti, Secretary General of RES4MED, who said that it is essential to move from a eurocentric approach to one aimed at creating an equal dialogue with the partners of the African continent. "An approach that was further opened and extended last year, when RES4Africa was born," explained Mr. Vigotti.

During his speech, Mr. Francesco Starace, CEO of Enel, underlined “how access to clean, affordable and reliable energy services is fundamental to drive sustainable economic growth in Africa”. Because Africa’s energy challenges are so diverse, a mix of large-scale projects, decentralized solutions, and grid enhancements will be key to unleashing the continent’s sustainable economic transformation and sustainable development. To unlock that enormous potential, challenges in African markets such as weak grid infrastructure and lacking interconnection, expected pushback from incumbents, and socio-development challenges will have to be overcome. “Indeed, renewables themselves can play a key role in this transition”, concluded Mr. Starace.

"There is an urgent need to accelerate renewable energy deployment in Africa – said Mr. Antonio Cammisecra, CEO of Enel Green Power and President of RES4MED – Yet, renewable energy technologies have gained important momentum thanks to the convergence of drivers such as enabling policy environments, dropping technology costs, improved efficiency, and an enabling context of new global trends”. There are many obstacles, but many innovative solutions are on the horizon. To keep ahead of the curve, Mr. Cammisecra announced that RES4MED and RES4Africa’s next strategic move will focus on incorporating innovation and sustainability into its thematic focus.

Mr. Francesco Venturini, director of Global E-Solutions said "Africa is becoming more and more a great laboratory of technological experimentation able to make a fundamental contribution to the future of the sector".

The Min. Plen. Massimo Gaiani, General Director for Globalization at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said: "Italy prefers a holistic approach towards energy access in Africa. Through innovation, both urban areas and sparsely populated and linked rural areas will benefit from the renewable energy resources of their continent, helping to reduce the negative economic and social effects that also spill beyond the size of the African continent. This consists of the preventive approach to migratory phenomena, represented on all by the migration context. The collaboration between the public sector and the private sector is fundamental, as well as the commitment of RES4MED also with the launch of RES4AFRICA”.

Other interventions included Prof. Modi from Columbia University on innovative bottom-of-pyramid solutions to rural electrification hurdles and Mrs. Christine Lins, General Secretary of REN21 presenting the newly published Renewables Global Futures Report. According to REN21, the renewables momentum is expected to double or even triple by 2050. Moreover, “an overwhelming share of surveyed experts believes that the future of renewables will be decentralized, thereby challenging current business

models. The next frontiers lie in taking renewables beyond the power sector and into heating & cooling, transport, and storage. By definition, overcoming these frontiers will require innovative approaches at a large scale”, concluded Mrs. Lins.

The Director of Kenya Power International, Dr. Jeremiah Kiplagat, announced the country's fiber-optic network Enhancement Program for use by telecommunications companies. Kenya Power Lighting Company (KPLC) has recently signed a MOU with RES4Africa with the aim to build the Mini-Grid Academy, a mini hybrid grid of 30 kw in Nairobi dedicated to training and capacity building purposes.

The Ethiopian Government, with the vice-minister of Industry Mr. Mebrahtu Meles, announced a partnership with UNIDO, UNDP, FAO and Italian Development Cooperation, for the realization of new agro-industrial parks. Companies will benefit from economies of scale in procurement processes and distribution logistics, as well as cutting-edge infrastructures. Crucial is the theme of their electrification: although in fact the parks will be provided by the national grid, it does not exclude the possibility of realizing renewable energy plants that can integrate or supply the deficiencies of the system. Ethiopia will be glad to build partnerships with Italian companies interested in cooperation.

On the sidelines of the conference, RES4MED signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Alliance for Rural Electrification (ARE) to formalize their cooperation on promoting the development of decentralized renewable energy solutions in emerging and developing markets. ARE Executive Director, Marcus Wiemann, and RES4MED Secretary General, Mr. Roberto Vigotti, concluded the MoU agreement in presence of the conference attendants and press. The importance of the agreement was emphasized by the Executive Director of ARE, Mr. Marcus Wiemann, who highlighted the common values shared by the two associations: "ARE plays a leading role in growing off-grid energy solutions and rural electrification in emerging markets and we are very pleased to formalize and deepen our collaboration with RES4MED through this MoU".

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Renewable Energy Solutions for the Mediterranean - RES4MED - is a non-profit Association established in 2012 as a network of utilities, industries, agencies, technical service providers, research institute and academia engaged in promoting clean energy solutions in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries. RES4MED's mission is to support the deployment of renewable energy - both large scale and distributed energy - and energy efficiency solutions and their integration in the local and regional markets to satisfy local energy needs.