

Declaration to G8 by the Partners-for-Africa (www.partners4africa.org) :

1. Energy poverty and the lack of services it can provide for cooking and heating, electricity and transport fuels continues to hamper development, particularly in rural areas of African countries.
2. Renewable energy systems provide a practical and substantial opportunity for African countries to combat poverty through wealth creation, developing sustainable energy supplies and working towards meeting the MDGs.
3. The use of renewable energy to provide these critical services that underpin the MDGs must be reflected in national policies and actions such as the Country Strategy Papers (CSPs) and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs):
 - In many cases renewable energy technologies provide the only realistic option for providing these services, particularly in poor rural areas.
 - Technologies such as wind, solar (PV and thermal) and biomass energy¹ have the economic potential to become self-sustaining but need support to gain sufficient market share.
4. Substantial progress has been made regarding renewable energies. There is now a bank of experience, as highlighted by Partners for Africa, with successful renewable energy projects and policies occurring within and between the African countries that must be taken stock of and assessed. This experience must be used to avoid duplication and delay by acting as the basis for a rapid, efficient and significant increase in the provision of energy for development. To this end, it is important that:
 - African countries develop realistic but challenging targets for implementation of renewable energy systems adapted to their socio-economic, cultural, and environmental features.
 - An African mechanism is established to share experience on good practice, policies and successful implementation / projects.
 - Donors assist developing countries to design local and sustainable models for development of the renewable energy sector.
5. The potential for international trade is regarded as an opportunity which must be seized urgently to help develop these sectors. This is particularly the case for bioenergy systems where excess value-added biofuels could be produced from under-utilised, marginal or under-invested land. It is important that African countries do not simply sell the raw biomass abroad but develop the industries for converting the biomass into value-added biofuels:
 - The international trade in value-added biofuels will require the development and implementation of internationally recognised standards and regulation systems.
 - International mechanisms for this already exist, e.g. IEA Task 40 and international assurance schemes for fair trade, quality assurance and sustainability assurance (e.g. ISEAL, FSC, etc) and must be exploited for the development of a sustainable bioenergy sector.
6. The agricultural systems of Africa have been heavily dis-invested over the last 3 decades. Renewable energy, led by bioenergy, represents an opportunity to reverse this disastrous trend and turn African agriculture into a dominant sector for driving development. African agriculture can then again be capable of sustainably producing the food and energy to provide the wealth generating activities needed to meet the MDGs for their rural populations:
 - freed from current constraints, it is estimated by a number of authoritative sources that African agriculture could provide a very significant share of the future world's energy without competing with food production or exploiting land in protected areas,
 - we believed that the production of energy from the land would diversify agriculture, contribute to income generation and enhance food security.
7. Funds for this new investment in renewable energy technologies and land could be provided from the money freed up through the debt relief process.
8. Linking debt relief to the promotion of renewable energies has win-win potential for both the developing (a clean and viable power sector) and the industrialised (tackling climate change) worlds.

¹ Energy from biomass (such as electricity, heat and transport fuels (bioethanol, biodiesel and biogas)) requires special attention because of the large share of the energy markets that could be supplied, but also the inherent linkages between the production of biomass for energy, land use and rural development. Bioenergy could play a central role in rural poverty alleviation.

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