

SIEW Episode 3 – IRENA - Transcript



Rachel Kelly (Money FM 89.3) 00:02

This SIEWCast is brought to you by Singapore International Energy Week and Money FM 89.3, in partnership with ExxonMobil. SIEW is an annual platform for energy professionals, policymakers and commentators to share best practices and solutions within the global energy space. The International Renewable Energy Agency or IRENA, is an intergovernmental organisation that supports countries in their transition to a sustainable energy future. This year marks the second Singapore, IRENA High-Level Forum, which will focus on much needed investments in the region. For example, IRENA has highlighted that by 2050, a total of 33 trillion US dollars of additional investment, that's an increase of 30%, will be required to be on track for a 1.5 degrees Celsius pathway. Francesco La Camera, Director General of IRENA joins us now to tell us more. Thank you so much for joining us today.

Francesco La Camera (IRENA) 01:07

My pleasure Rachel, my pleasure.

Rachel Kelly (Money FM 89.3) 01:10

Francesco let's start off, what's your vision for the energy landscape in 2050, in Asia.

Francesco La Camera (IRENA) 01:22

I always say that the Paris Agreement is at stake, mainly in two regions of the world. One is the African continent, the other one ASEAN Southeast Asia, where the energy demand will be growing. And it's a good sign of growing economies. And from the other side, we have to be careful that this increase in economic activity doesn't mean an increase in the emission. So it's important to understand that this

region is critical. What we see about our landscape to 2050, to be coherent with a Paris Agreement, goal shooting pathway is to that we have to move from the 90% more or less that we have over renewables in the region to having more than two thirds of renewables to the region. And on this, I think some documents that we also will be going to present to the Singapore. I'm always happy to be there. It's our ASEAN outlook at where we give our tips on what we need in terms of technologies, in policies, and also trying to assess the socio-economic benefits of this transition.

Rachel Kelly (Money FM 89.3) 02:46

So you mentioned a number of ways that you're going to be working with the region perhaps you can spell out for us more clearly the role that you will play in supporting the low carbon energy transition for the region. We speak a lot about transition here in Asia, moving from a brown economy to a green economy. What's IRENA's role here where we're talking about low carbon energy?

Francesco La Camera (IRENA) 03:16

So the answer to your question is in our statute. So we are an intergovernmental agency that is promoting the widespread of renewables around the world. So, while we can perform these tasks in the region, naturally, we have been working on what is needed in terms of technologies, so that the technologies are the first aspect. Also taking into account (that) in the region, we have many coal plants that are new, so we have a new generation of coal plants. So, the dismissal of these coal plants will be economically engaging. So we have supported the countries in their own planning. Globally in the world, we have supported 84 countries in presenting their NDCs, their commitment in the achievement of the Paris Agreement goals in Glasgow, and we are continuing to work on supporting countries in their planning. We are also supporting the country making the evidence so the case of renewables become more and more competitive. And with our publications, with our reports, with our common work with the countries our membership and with the ASEAN region officials. Recently we have also started to work on facilitating the funding for projects and we had the first experience just in Southeast Asia a few weeks ago in Bali, where in the occasion of the G20, we held back-to-back the first IRENA Investment Forum in the context of the climate investment platform initiative together with UNDP, SEforALL, in collaboration with Green Climate Fund. This, I think was very promising. We are trying to list projects, you know, people say the money's there, but there are no projects. Now, we are trying to have also the projects, and we are trying to make the matching between the projects, and we are working with project proponents, to ensure the quality, the bankability and the funding available.

Rachel Kelly (Money FM 89.3) 05:20

And you mentioned the money's there, but there are no projects. What are some of the key challenges when you're looking at transition here in the region?

Francesco La Camera (IRENA) 05:28

Yeah, one we have already mentioned. So, the fact that we have a fleet of new coal plants, the economic to say a resistance to the change is also an economical evidence. Another aspect is not just for Southeast Asia as a whole, it is a common is the question of the grids. So, we need updating the grid system, we need interconnected grid, we need flexible grid, and we need balanced grid. And this has to be done in a cooperative effort among countries and inside in the domestic arena, so naturally the grid. The other aspect that we have to be careful of is to have the right policy to attract investment. So the legal

environment is important, having transparent bids working on auction, and trying to see to build business models that are fitting to the reality in the country. So we have also to consider that countries may be different, maybe different characteristics, and we have to adapt to these characteristics to find solutions.

Rachel Kelly (Money FM 89.3) 06:44

The region is indeed very diverse. You're listening to Money FM 89.3. We're speaking to Francesco La Camera, Director General of the International Renewable Energy Agency. This is part of a special series of SIEWCast brought to you by Singapore International Energy Week and Money FM, in partnership with ExxonMobil. Now, you mentioned at capital but beyond capital, what else is required to further accelerate renewable energy development in the region? You spoke about the grid, you spoke about policy about mindset changes. How achievable is all this? What kind of timeframe are we looking at as well?

Francesco La Camera (IRENA) 07:33

You know, that's the question that we have no timeframe. So we have to act and we have to act as fast as soon as fast as possible. Because we are really risking to lose the 1.5 pathway in a very short time so we have to act absolutely. Now, what is important, actually is to announce the capacity to assist countries and also one key aspect that's been also outlined in the occasion of G20 is the international cooperation. We need to be able to do more in supporting countries in their transitions that's not just a mere transition from brown to green. The transition also is for having an energy system that provides in the future, the elements for the less unequal than today. So we have also working in the transition not only for greening the system, but making the system more fair and just.

Rachel Kelly (Money FM 89.3) 08:50

From your perspective, though, let's talk about it from an end-user perspective. What about electrification? How could end user electrification impact the region and from there what opportunities does this present for decarbonisation?

Francesco La Camera (IRENA) 09:07

Naturally, there's something that belongs not only to the region so the electrification (cut connection) ... complimented by green hydrogen and sustainable biomass. So these are elements that have to be taken into account. But when we talk about the end use, hydrogen could be a real game changer. The region has the chance to produce their own hydrogen and hydrogen can really work for greening the end-use sectors, so transport or industry, we're talking about long shipping transport. In industry, hydrogen could play a very important role and also in the region, sustainable use of biomass could be key for trying to put the region in line with the 1.5 pathway. On end-use sectors, remember hydrogen is key and biomass could play a role.

Rachel Kelly (Money FM 89.3) 10:13

Okay, so, to summarise and to round up in IRENA's view, what will be a key to driving a resilient and sustainable energy future.

Francesco La Camera (IRENA) 10:25

All I can say is that, you see in the beginning of our conversation is moving fast to renewables, and use green hydrogen as soon as possible to make the industry of green hydrogen to be there. And trying to

also to make the right use of the sustainable biomass, that the region have the luxury. So it's important that moving fast in this direction. And naturally, IRENA is there and the Singapore International Energy Week will be the right moment to discuss all these aspects together and trying to work on identify the barriers and try to overcome those barriers. So I think the Singapore International Energy Week as usual, is a key moment in discussing the energy future for us. Action, action, action, we need action and we need action now.

Rachel Kelly (Money FM 89.3) 11:29

Wise words there. Well, Francesco, thank you so much for taking the time to speak with us today.

We've been speaking with Francesco La Camera, Director General of the International Renewable Energy Agency. This SIEWCast is brought to you by Singapore International Energy Week and Money FM in partnership with ExxonMobil.