

Extract of the Speech by Milko VAN GOOL
Counsellor and Head of Cooperation Bangladesh
At the final conference of the RENDEV project, supported by the European
Commission's Intelligent Energy Europe programme
Dhaka, 8th December 2009

Thank you very much for inviting the Delegation of the European Union to Bangladesh to participate at the final conference of the RENDEV project

This project which intends to increase the availability and usage of electricity in rural areas of Indonesia and Bangladesh is supported by the Intelligent Energy Europe programme managed by the European Commission's Executive Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation

The particular geography of these two countries makes very costly the distribution networks to rural customer. In those conditions, implementing Off-Grid solutions supplying green electricity without requiring complex maintenance, on a moderate price is an excellent solution for providing the benefits of electrification to rural populations.

Bringing renewable energy and especially solar electricity in remote rural areas is a major step forward to reduce poverty and an important contributor to achieve the millennium development goals. Lighting in schools and at home allows the students to study beyond daylight; electrical irrigation pumps increase food production; medicine refrigeration and equipment sterilization improves health indicators, and in a country so affected by Climate Change as Bangladesh it reduces deforestation and green house gas emissions from traditional fuels.

The innovative approach of the RENDEV project linking up simultaneously microfinance mechanisms, solar energy technology with small and medium size enterprise development is an interesting initiative which can bring enormous benefits to the rural areas of Bangladesh.

The countries of the European Union are currently the global leaders in the development and application of renewable energy. Promoting the use of renewable energy sources is important both to the reduction of the EU's dependence on foreign energy imports, and in meeting targets to combat global warming. The EU leaders reached agreement in principle in March 2007 that 20 percent of the bloc's energy should be produced from renewable sources by 2020 as part of its drive to cut emissions of carbon dioxide.

The European Union in its efforts to fight Climate Change and poverty is supporting similar initiatives in Bangladesh. The Khulna City Corporation in collaboration with European universities is implementing a pilot project to introduce photovoltaic energy in Khulna division to overcome power shortages. A resource and training centre has been established to capacitate technicians and SMEs to construct and install its own photovoltaic solar modules. Having its own energy generation will guarantee SMEs production without interruptions during the regular power supply-off period and will help to promote this technology to other consumer

The European Commission attributes a high importance to the active dissemination of project activities and results to an audience beyond the project partners in order to achieve a leverage effect. This is why I want to take this opportunity to give special thanks to PlaNet Finance and its partners for organizing this event in Dhaka.

I wish you all a very fruitful and successful Conference.

Milko VAN GOOL
Counsellor and Head of Cooperation Bangladesh

Delegation of the European Union to Bangladesh: <http://www.delbgd.ec.europa.eu/>