

Press Release

Catania, 14 March 2018

Fostering investment, breaking down barriers and data transparency help drive off-grid project bankability

Catania, 14 March 2018 – The Alliance for Rural Electrification (ARE) gathered over 200 participants in Catania, Italy from 13-15 March 2018 for the 4th edition of the [ARE Energy Access Investment Forum](#) organised in partnership with Renewable Energy Solutions for the Mediterranean and Africa (RES4MED&Africa) and the Africa-EU Renewable Energy Cooperation Programme (RECP).

The **ARE Energy Access Investment Conference Day on 13 March 2018** provided participants with a comprehensive view of the clean-energy sector policy framework and key industry trends to foster the integration of remote communities into emerging economies around the world. The event, including the European Commission's Workshop on the Energy Digital Nexus, was an opportunity for investors, project developers and other stakeholders to learn more about upcoming support schemes, innovative products and new business models to accelerate rural electrification and advance the market for decentralised renewable energies.

Vivian Vendeirinho, ARE's new President: *"ARE works in the framework built by the SDG7 in order to support sustainable development for rural communities. ARE's Membership has developed incredibly in the last 10 years, reaching over 150 Members by end of last year – a clear statement that the market has reached a tipping point. Now, we want to focus on initiating more Member partnerships to validate the sector and demonstrate its scalability. This will help provide real added value for our Members: creating direct business opportunities in the energy access space."*

The presence of high-level representatives from developing organisations active in Africa, Asia and Latin America, as well as from the private sector, financing bodies and technology providers allowed key players involved in the off-grid sector to engage in networking activities. Leaders called for a strategic and holistic approach to develop sustainable business models in the off-grid sector. A key topic was the need to intensify multilateral efforts to allow for the deployment of hybridised solutions such as mini-grids and to break down regulatory, technical and local barriers. In addition, cross-sectoral partnerships with the agricultural, water and digital sector should be privileged where synergies are possible.

Roberto Vigotti, RES4Africa: *"Decentralised renewable energy solutions are central to electrify rural areas in Africa and beyond. RES4Africa is proud to support the ambition of the ARE Energy Access Investment Forum as the key annual meeting platform that promotes progress for energy access around the world."*

The Forum also gave recognition to companies and organisations, which have made special contributions to advance the rural electrification sector. In its third year running, this year's ARE Awards were discerned to:

- **EUEI PDF** (Multilateral / International Organisations)
- **Shamwana Hospital** (NGOs and Foundations)
- **Autarsys** (Private Sector in Developed Countries)
- **Rift Valley Energy** (Private Sector in Developing Countries)
- **Sarawak Energy** (Government in Developing Country)
- **Ensol** and **Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund** (Best Off-grid Project)
- **ColdHubs** (Best Start-Up; new category)

The **Business Matchmaking Day** on **14 March 2018** (supported by RECP) featured a series of panel discussions with selected DFIs and private sector representatives on off-grid data collection and investment, project financing tools and new initiatives, including a presentation on the deployment of renewable energy tender programmes in Africa. In the afternoon, 135 participants took part in more than 450 B2B meetings where participants had the chance to meet with potential business partners.

Jan Cloin, RECP Project Manager: *“The Forum provides an excellent opportunity for developers in the off-grid sector to meet partners, learn about investment opportunities and obtain support towards financially closing business deals. ARE proves to operate at the heart of the fast growing off-grid sector and we are pleased to be partnering with them on this event.”*

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Note to the editor

The [Alliance for Rural Electrification \(ARE\)](#) is an international business association with the aim to promote a sustainable decentralised renewable energy industry for the 21st century, activating markets for affordable energy services, and creating local jobs and inclusive economies. ARE enables improved energy access through business development support for its Membership along the whole value chain for off-grid technologies.

Vivian Vendeirinho was elected as new President of ARE at the ARE General Assembly on 12 March 2018. He replaces Ernesto Macias who has stepped down after 12 years of service. Emily McAteer (Odyssey Solutions, USA), Prosper Magali (Ensol, Tanzania) and Sukla Chandra (GE, India) also join the Alliance as Board Members.

[Renewable Energy Solutions for the Mediterranean and Africa \(RES4MED&Africa\)](#) is an association that promotes the deployment of large-scale and decentralised renewable energy and energy efficiency in Southern-Mediterranean and Sub-Saharan African countries to meet local energy needs. RES4MED&Africa gathers a member network from across the clean energy value chain and supports the creation of an enabling environment for renewable energy investments and strategic partnerships.

The [Africa-EU Renewable Energy Cooperation Programme \(RECP\)](#) is a multi-donor platform for promoting renewable energy market development and investment in Africa. It thereby contributes to growth and development on both continents, and to addressing national and global energy access as well as climate change objectives. Focusing on decentral renewable energy markets, the RECP provides a set of support services around private sector mobilisation (market information, B2B matchmaking, enabling associations) and pipeline development (coaching and supporting projects in their access to financing). It is financed by the European Commission, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria and Finland.

