

The Abu Dhabi meeting of ISA's Asia-Pacific region charts course towards solar-powered future ahead of COP28

26 July 2023 | Abu Dhabi, UAE – The International Solar Alliance (ISA) convened the Fifth Meeting of the ISA Regional Committee for Asia and the Pacific Region, reaffirming its commitment to promote solar energy adoption for a cleaner and more sustainable future. The Meeting hosted in collaboration with the UAE government in Abu Dhabi from 24-26 July 2023 addressed the urgent need to develop and deploy cutting-edge solar power solutions at scale, upgrade infrastructure and grids, and achieving renewable energy targets by 2030. During the Meeting the speakers underscored the transformative actions needed to keep the world on a 1.5°C pathway and address the challenges posed by climate change.

Dialogues at the ISA's 5th Meeting of the Asia Pacific Region, which attracted high-level participation of several small island developing states (SIDS), were centered around mobilizing resources for fast-tracking just energy transition. Key areas of focus included the promotion of climate mitigation technologies, enhancing socioeconomic opportunities, and ensuring no one gets left behind in the journey towards a sustainable future.

Hon'ble Minister of Energy and Infrastructure of United Arab Emirates, Suhail Mohamed Al Mazrouei, who delivered the keynote, said: *"Solar power plays a pivotal role in shaping the future energy landscape, driving sustainable development, and combating climate change. As we set our sights on COP28, it is evident that solar energy is not just a part of the solution, it is the key to unlocking a low-carbon future. By harnessing the potential of solar technologies, we can make significant strides towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions and charting a course to limit global warming to 1.5°C."*

He added: *"The United Arab Emirates is a longstanding friend and founding member of the ISA and we are impressed with the progress it has made over the past years and we are confident it will continue to grow the solar energy industry for many years to come. Hosting the ISA's 5th Regional Meeting in Abu Dhabi reinforces our commitment to mobilising global support for transformative solar solutions. Through international collaboration and cooperation with key partners like the ISA, we can help enhance energy access and uplift communities on the frontlines of climate change. As the host of COP 28, the United Arab Emirates perceives the Global energy transition as the front and center focus of the Presidency and will work with all participants to help make a concentrated push to triple renewable energy capacity and double the production of hydrogen by 2030. In line with the global priorities of slashing emissions by 43% by the year 2030 to meet the objective of the Paris agreement."*

Director General of the International Solar Alliance, Dr Ajay Mathur, noted, *"We are glad to be hosting the 5th Asia Pacific meeting in UAE, a country that has one of the most affordable solar electricity worth only 2 and a half cent kilo-watt hour. This is a promising example of the future of solar energy in the Asia Pacific. Solar has already significantly exceeded the projections for it over the last decade, and demonstrated its efficacy in enabling energy access at the lowest cost to the most hard to reach populations, providing energy security for vulnerable developing economies and being a critical piece for accelerating energy transitions globally. Today's global clean energy moment is a pivotal turning point to transform our ambitious energy commitments into action while we ensure the security of supply. As we approach the global stocktake and move closer to the 2030 deadline, while also seeing the intensifying climate impacts across the world, it is critical that we approach this challenge in a collaborative manner, bringing together our solutions and resources to address the challenge of ensuring universal access to clean energy, and commit to a work program to further address these challenges."*

He added *"Numerous APAC countries have embraced favourable policies and support mechanisms, which have actively encouraged the deployment of solar energy. As illustrated by the backing of such policies and regulatory stability, the continued political will shall be pivotal for ensuring sustained growth in solar energy throughout the Region."*

H.E. Ambassador Majid Al Suwaidi, Director-General and Special Representative of the 28th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28) who participated in the inaugural

ceremony of the meeting said, *“I commend the International Solar Alliance for its proactive, visionary leadership in clean energy. The “Towards 1000” strategy of the ISA includes its plan to mobilize 1 trillion U.S. dollars for solar energy to benefit billions of people and is deeply welcomed. This strategy aims to put in place 1000 gigawatts of clean energy by 2030, contributing to a reduction of a billion tons of CO₂. These goals align very well with the COP 28 presidencies recently announced presidential action agenda.”*

He added, *“We recognize that the critical enablers of clean energy such as capacities and technologies are entirely contingent on climate finance. Finance that is typically inaccessible, unavailable and unaffordable. We’re trying to fix this. We’re working to unlock trillions in investment this includes 100 billion promised by developed countries, it includes the reform of the international financial institutions to get concessional loans moving where they need to be, and it includes bringing private sector partners into the great green tent and encouraging a global surge in renewable energy investments. We want our partners to help us remove red tape and prohibitive policies to ease investments and to make the global South a prime destination for foreign investment. We want to make the business case that this is the smart thing to do for energy security, for economic growth and for climate action.”*

A total of 26 countries are ISA members from the Asia Pacific Region, with 23 members and three signatories. The People’s Republic of Bangladesh and Tuvalu are the current office bearers of the Region’s Vice Presidency. **Hon’ble State Minister for Power, Energy & Mineral Resources of Bangladesh, Mr Nasrul Hamid**, presided over the meeting, as the Vice President of the International Solar Alliance. He said: *“The ISA aims to contribute to the clean energy transition by deploying solar energy solutions. The ISA has nine comprehensive programs that cover a wide range of sectors, including agriculture, health, transportation, storage, green hydrogen and more. All aimed at harnessing the potential of solar power. ISA has also introduced various initiatives to propel these missions. I express my utmost confidence in the collective efforts of the International Solar Alliance and its member countries to promote clean energy, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing. Together, we have the power to accelerate the global transition away from fossil fuels and forge a prosperous, equitable, and clean energy future for generations to come.”*

He added that *“Bangladesh has already expressed its aspiration, in COP26, to have 40% of our energy from renewable sources by 2041. We recognize that this goal is an ambitious one, but our determination drives us to make remarkable strides in scaling up renewable energy in our country. We have adopted and implemented various policies and initiatives to promote renewable energy, energy efficiency, and cleaner use of fossil fuels. We are developing new policies and plans to pave the way for energy transition. We have successfully materialized the world’s largest solar power dissemination program, with approximately 6 million Solar Home Systems providing electricity to over 20 million people. These efforts have made a substantial impact on the lives of our citizens, empowering communities with access to clean and reliable electricity.”*

Mr Nasrul Hamid also highlighted commitment to green and clean energy and noted that, *“Bangladesh has taken a bold step by moving away from implementing ten coal-based power plant projects, amounting to approximately 10 billion US dollars of investment. This decision signifies our unwavering dedication to combating climate change and embracing clean energy solutions, even though it may have financial repercussions. I humbly request the support and understanding of this esteemed committee to help us attract investments in our power sector to offset these financial challenges.*

Day one of the Meeting highlighted important ISA initiatives designed for Member Countries to improve solar energy solutions. **ISA’s Global Solar Finance Facility** enables access to affordable finance for solar energy projects, especially in developing countries, which remains a challenge. ISA presented the Global Solar Finance Facility’s role in bridging this investment gap and driving large-scale impact. **ISA’s SolarX Startup Challenge**, which announced the winners of its introductory Africa edition recently, focuses on transforming solar innovation to stimulate the advent of scalable and replicable business models to accelerate the global energy transition. The **Solar Technology Application Resource Centre [STAR-C] initiative** is a stellar example of ISA’s capacity-building and institutional strengthening initiative in developing Member Countries. A priority strongly

recognised in ISA's Theory of Change. STAR- C initiative aims to cultivate the desired human capacity and skills among a Member Country's populace to encourage the significant undertaking of energy transition activities, creating jobs and ultimately contributing to the country's economic growth.

Day two of the Meeting proceedings spotlighted two important themes ISA is currently focussing on through exclusive thematic sessions - the **One Sun One World One Grid (OSOWOG) initiative**, which envisions the connection of different regional grids through a common grid that will be used to transfer renewable energy power and, thus, realise the potential of renewable energy sources, especially solar energy. This session shared and initiated inter-governmental discussions to identify potential paths for countries and regions worldwide and for other stakeholders to come together to ensure the successful implementation of the Green Grids Initiative (GGI)-OSOWOG initiative. Furthermore, the session encouraged collaboration and idea-sharing among countries and other stakeholders to work together on building an interconnected and resilient electricity grid.

The second thematic session, a **Private - Public Sector Panel on Solar + Storage**, highlighted successful storage projects in the Region as well as upcoming plans for solar + storage in ISA Member Countries. It addressed various current and emerging energy storage technologies.

The Fifth Meeting of the Asia Pacific Region was a platform for further in-depth discussions, collaborative efforts, and policy recommendations to accelerate solar energy deployment in the Region and beyond. The ISA's commitment to promoting sustainable energy and combating climate change remains unwavering, and this regional meeting marks another significant milestone in its journey.

About the ISA Regional Committee Meetings: The Regional Committees of the ISA meet annually, chaired by two Vice-Presidents from the Region, and aim to assess and discuss progress, challenges, and opportunities related to ISA's programmatic support, flagship initiatives, partnerships, private sector engagements, and work plan for the Region. A significant goal of the Regional Committee Meetings is smooth coordination among the Region's Member Countries.

About the International Solar Alliance: The International Solar Alliance is an international organisation with 116 Member and Signatory countries. It works with governments to ease solar deployment and promote solar power as a sustainable transition to a carbon-neutral future. ISA's mission is to unlock US\$ 1 trillion of investments in solar by 2030 while reducing technology and its financing costs. It promotes the use of solar energy in the agriculture, health, transport, and power generation sectors. ISA Member Countries are driving change by enacting policies and regulations, sharing best practices, agreeing on common standards, and mobilising investments. Through this work, ISA has identified and designed and tested new business models for solar projects; supported governments to make their energy legislation and policies solar-friendly through Ease of Doing Solar analytics and advisory; pooled demand for solar technology from different countries; and drove down costs; improved access to finance by reducing the risks and making the sector more attractive to private investment; increased access to solar training, data and insights for solar engineers and energy policymakers. ISA is one of the first international intergovernmental organisations headquartered in India. It is partnering with multilateral development banks (MDBs), development financial institutions (DFIs), private and public sector organisations, civil society, and other international institutions to deploy cost-effective and transformational solutions through solar energy, especially in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and the Small Island Developing States (SIDS). More information at <https://isolaralliance.org/>

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