

International Solar Alliance- An Indian initiative

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International Solar Alliance (ISA) was conceived and announced by PM Modi and Former French President Hollande on 30th November 2015, at the 21st session of United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP-21) in Paris. Following that, on 11 March 2018, India led the world into a new era of mutually beneficial multilateral effort through the inauguration of the International Solar Alliance in New Delhi by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron along with over 20 other Heads of States and Governments. This is an effort with a difference that it has become a North-South collaborative paradigm in the wake of adverse climate change that threatens the very existence of the human race. When the Climate Change Treaty itself was under threat with President Trump announcing the withdrawal of USA from the Treaty, USA did become a part of the International Solar alliance and lauded the efforts of the Indian leader.

Although India had launched its Solar Mission in 2010 it was only on 30 November 2015 that India and France embarked on the ISA initiative with the Paris Declaration. The declaration supported India's proposal to launch an International Solar Alliance as a common platform for cooperation among solar resource rich countries lying fully or partially between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn". More than 89 countries have already signed the ISA Framework Agreement and 72 have ratified it by middle of 2020. Australia, Bangladesh, Cuba, France, Ghana, India, Papua New Guinea, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Togo, the United Arab Emirates and Venezuela are among those that have ratified the agreement. The ISA was accorded a status of a multilateral Treaty by the UN which came into force on 6 December 2020. It does recognise the challenge for which all member countries have to act in a coordinated manner so that the financing requirements as well as that of technology transfer and capacity building flow unencumbered so that affordable solar energy could reach for all. With the establishment of its headquarters in Gurgaon, India the projects and focussed approach will hopefully move with the requisite speed to achieve desired objectives.

ISA aims to deploy 1000 GW of solar capacity. However, in order to bring the clean and affordable energy for all, the ISA will need an estimated US\$ 1000 bn of investment until 2030 – a huge task indeed but the vision is exemplary. President Macron announced a provision of Euro 700 mn for financing the objectives of the Alliance. India has also allocated nearly US\$ 2bn for funding the solar projects from its Africa

Fund for development for which already several projects have been cleared or are in the pipeline on the continent. The way forward to harness the renewable energy included making solar technology affordable to all nations, raising the share of electricity generated from photovoltaic cells in the energy mix, framing regulations and standards, consultancy support for bankable solar projects and creating a network of centres for excellence, Prime Minister Narendra Modi underlined at the founding conference of ISA.

Prime Minister Modi in his inaugural address announced India's commitment to extend nearly US\$ 1.4 billion worth of lines of credit which will cover 27 projects in 15 countries. This initiative was widely welcomed by the International Solar Alliance Founding States and the beneficiary countries. This is indeed one of the largest commitment to financing solar energy projects around the world. The projects in these 15 countries will include setting up of solar PV power plants, mini grid and off grid usage, irrigation, rural electrification, street lighting, solar power for urban infrastructure including for health, hospitals, colleges, schools, government establishments, low income families etc.

India has been diversifying its own energy sources from fossil fuels to renewables. It is increasing the share of renewal energy significantly and plans to produce 175 GW of which 100 GW will be from the solar energy by 2022. Already during 2017 India had crossed 20 GW of solar energy which is the highest growth of almost 140% in the world in this sector. Renewable energy capacity in India increased from 39 GW to 63 GW during the last two years .In order to effectively use energy saving devices and to supplement solar energy generation, India has distributed 28 crore LED bulbs in the last three years which have helped save USD 2 billion and 4 GW of electricity. An Indian Union territory DIU has become the first state to be fully solar powered with 100% solar power generation.

However there are certain limitations and constraints that need to be overcome by a dynamic policy framework which should address the legitimate interests of manufacturers, producers and consumers. The manufacturers and producers wanted the withdrawal of recent imposition of 5% tax apart from enhanced duties on imported photovoltaic cells and panels. In addition cost competitiveness & high T&D losses , focus of manufactures of PV cells on export markets rather than local , availability of land, complex subsidy structure, storage batteries , multiple government agencies, financing ,technology, low expenditure on R&D etc. pose significant constraints on achieving solar power generation on the real and desired scale.

International Solar Alliance (ISA) has successfully institutionalized ISA Solar Awards to recognize distinguished scientists and organizations that excel in providing affordable, reliable, and sustainable solar energy. Despite Covid impact ISA Solar Award 2020 were announced to honour the ISA achievers, innovators and inventors. India was re-elected as President of the ISA last year.

Covid -19 has taught us to focus on 3 Hs – Health, Hunger and Habitat and all three are interlinked via clean energy , renewables and closely integrated into sustainable development . For continued focus and to evolve newer areas of collaboration the Sun Meets are organised by the ISA. 31st Sun Meet is planned for January 20,2021 focussing on solarization of villages in ISA countries.

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