

MEDGRID SIGNATURE SPEECH

Minister,
President Sarkozy Special Advisor,
Presidents and Director Generals,
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great honor for me to be amongst you, in such a distinguished assembly, to address the signature of this very important Mediterranean energy project and I thank Minister BESSON for his invitation.

MEDGRID could, in the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean and of the Mediterranean Solar Plan, the MSP, be a major contribution toward our common goal of combatting climate change as well as a key tool for promoting the development of renewable energies.

I would like to take advantage of today's event to convey three key messages:

- first: I try to build step by step a new institution dedicated to the support of Mediterranean projects in the broader framework of the Union for the Mediterranean,
- second: energy and, more specifically, the Mediterranean Solar Plan, is a key sector for the Secretariat,
- third: MEDGRID is a particularly interesting project in this context.

As you know the UfM is built on various Euro-med initiatives, especially the acquis of the Barcelona Process. The Union for the Mediterranean is pragmatic: it will be embracing variable geometry, depending on the projects involved.

The Secretariat will assume a key role within the Union for the Mediterranean, in order to achieve the goals of this initiative. It is mandated to identify, follow-up, promote projects and to search for funding and for implementation partners.

In this context we should promote regional, sub-regional and trans-national projects that further socio-economic development, regional integration, sustainable development, and impact directly the livelihoods of their citizens.

We will really start this work in the next weeks since our budget and work program have just been adopted by the 43 member States providing us a framework to launch our activities.

Energy is a key sector in the Mediterranean region. We have difficult challenges as well as great opportunities. The challenges are there: a rapid growth of energy demand (more than 5 % per year), ecological threats, lack of sustainable energy policy í So are the opportunities: the region has one of the highest potential in the world for the development of renewable energies.

Many questions must still be addressed: the high costs of renewable energies generation , how to bridge the gap between these costs and average market prices with fossil fuels, connections between the two shores of the Mediterranean sea, situation of the different projects, state of play of climate negotiations, legislative frameworksí

Therefore, the Mediterranean Solar Plan, the MSP, is one of the key initiatives launched at the Paris Summit. It sets a clear target: 20 GW of renewable energy production capacity by 2020.

The Secretariat has been given, in the Paris declaration, the mandate to explore the feasibility, the development and creation of a Mediterranean Solar Plan. Our work program states that we will coordinate the elaboration of the MSP Master Plan. We will start this process in early 2011 in close relation with all the stakeholders and we will support individual projects.

In this context MEDGRID is an attractive project which deals with a key issue: the transmission of electricity, in particular green electricity, between the two shores of the Mediterranean. It could pave the way to the development of the exports of green electricity from MENA to Europe. This might help European countries to meet the renewable targets fixed in EU legislation at a lower price and facilitate the funding of renewable energy projects in MENA countries. That is the idea of the article 9 of the renewable energy directive.

Many things are still to be done. For the time being the interconnection between Spain and Morocco is the only existing one between MENA and in Europe. A second, between Tunisia and Italy is expected in the coming years. Transmission of electricity is a very promising area for research and development. The development of smart grids will probably change key elements of our energy model.

I hope that MEDGRID will bring a major contribution to these issues.

Thank you for your attention

