

# Press Release

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## **New Report Links Renewable Energy to Climate Change Solutions**

DUBAI/PARIS, 8 February 2006 - Renewable energy must play a major role in the global energy supply to meet the increasingly serious environmental and economic threats of climate change, according to a new report from the Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century (REN21).

*Changing Climates, the Role of Renewable Energy in a Carbon-Constrained World* cites an “emerging consensus” in both the scientific and political communities that a global warming limit of 2oC above pre-industrial levels can avoid the most serious climate change threats. But, the report adds, this level can only be reached with major long-term emission reductions from many different and combined options, including larger renewable energy markets, efficiency improvements, and fossil fuels that are much cleaner than those on which the world’s US\$60 trillion economy currently depends.

The report’s lead author, John Christensen from the UNEP Risoe Centre on Climate, Energy and Sustainable Development, says that many renewable energy technologies have “moved from being a passion for the dedicated few to a major economic sector attracting large industrial companies and financial institutions”.

However, basic policy questions remain, including the need to ensure technical progress, overcome implementation barriers, and accelerate the shift to renewable energy. “Although there are many good political, economic and social reasons for stimulating a more rapid development of renewable energy – not the least of which is climate change - the sector is hampered by a number of market distortions and institutional, financial, and economic barriers,” says Christensen.

*Changing Climates* follows the release of the REN21 Global Status Report that found that US\$30 billion was invested in the renewable energy sector in 2004, which contributes 160 GW, or approximately 4% of global power capacity. To significantly increase this investment and contribution, *Changing Climates* says economic policy instruments can quickly improve the cost-competitiveness of renewable energy systems and technologies. The report uses a range of different “scenario” analysis from the International Energy Agency and other institutions to show how

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national and regional strategies can help to grow the renewable energy sector and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

“Using economic policy instruments, such as renewable energy targets and tax incentives can be an effective strategy to stimulate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in energy markets that are increasingly deregulated and market orientated,” Christensen says, citing the evolving experiences with carbon finance and emissions trading as promising longer-term incentives for developing renewable energy markets.

One of the report’s conclusions is that specific policy tools need to fit local circumstances, but significant experience is already available in both developed and developing countries to guide the use of these policies. With the current and predicted cost competitiveness of many renewable energy technologies, however, it is not necessary to wait for strengthened global agreements before taking action at the national level.

*Changing Climates* was launched today during the 9th Special Session of UNEP’s Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum which is taking place in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Here, environment ministers from across the world are meeting to discuss energy, and other issues, topping the environmental policy agenda.

The launch of the report coincides with the opening of a new REN21 secretariat office, headed by Paul Suding and supported by UNEP and GTZ, the German Technical Cooperation. The new office is housed in the UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics in Paris.

The *Global Status Report* and *Changing Climates* can be found at [www.ren21.net](http://www.ren21.net).

#### **Note to Editors**

REN21 is a global policy network created in response to a commitment of the International Conference for Renewable Energies which was convened in Bonn, Germany, in 2004. Composed of representatives of governments, business and civil society, REN21’s goal is to support the rapid expansion of renewable energy in developing and developed countries by bolstering policy development and decision-making at the local, national, and international levels.

Details and document relating to the 9th Special Session of UNEP’s Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum can be found at <http://www.unep.org/gc/gcss-ix/>

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