

Renewable Energy Global Policy Network: Consultation Report

– Unofficial non-paper –

Background

The REGPN-consultation process was undertaken September / October 2004. A preliminary concept paper describing the proposed REGPN was distributed among approximately 70 interested parties representing a variety of stakeholder groups: national governments, regional and local authorities, international institutions, the business and financial community, environment and development NGOs, among others. As of October, 17 2004, feedback was received from 42 of the consulted stakeholders. Communication of these reactions took a variety of forms ranging from precise written comments of great length, to informal telephone conversations, to abruptly written preference sketches.

The central findings collected in this report do not represent the views of the organizing committee, or of any official decision making body. They are intended to provide an interim picture of opinions amongst stakeholder groups regarding the proposed REGPN. Views among various stakeholder groups showed no clear pattern based on the type of group (i.e. governments, NGOs, or multilateral institutions).

- A. Purpose of REGPN
- B. Goals and core functions of REGPN
- C. Thematic foci
- D. Network structure and organization
- E. Relationship to other fora, organizations, partnerships etc
- F. Your involvement

Main findings

A. PURPOSE of REGPN

Out of all stakeholders consulted, two felt that the REGPN should not be created. The initiators were strongly encouraged by these respondents to instead support existing networks such as REEEP.

The majority of stakeholders expressed their desire for the REGPN to directly and openly monitor IAP commitments. Of these supporters, several suggested that network members voluntarily submit status reports according to prescribed self-assessment deadlines on an annual or biannual basis. One stakeholder suggested that these reports become the basis for extending network membership. Another stakeholder suggested that awards be presented to inspire and honor achievements. Several believe these reports should be submitted to the CSD.

Four stakeholders felt the network should definitely not play a direct role in monitoring the IAP. In the words of one stakeholder, the REGPN should be “all carrot and no stick”. These stakeholders imagine that the network, as a knowledge community, will consolidate updated information, thereby indirectly publicizing progress and the status of commitments. As a result, there is no need to formally state monitoring of the IAP as its mission or directly aim to create pressure.

A strong majority of respondents hope the REGPN will provide networking and organizing services. Several respondents caution the network not to overlap with existing initiatives. However, the majority do not believe it will diminish the resource base for other initiatives, but will instead become *the* place for these different initiatives to coordinate their efforts. It will be a political focal point for countries and institutions that want to move faster than the multilateral process. It will provide a common influencing strategy- a virtual renewables2004.

The remaining stakeholders are not specifically opposed to collaboration, but envision the REGPN as primarily an information network- generating and disseminating knowledge, conducting data collection and policy studies.

Likewise, the respondents that support a coordination agenda are not opposed to data-collection, but want the REGPN to take a more proactive approach- bolstering institutional effectiveness, providing innovative implementation mechanisms.

B. GOALS and CORE FUNCTIONS of REGPN

The most universal agreement amongst stakeholders was the desire that the REGPN, as its most overarching goal, create momentum towards mainstreaming renewable energy. Several respondents feel that an annual conference is necessary to present evaluation studies, facilitate access to decision makers, enable advocacy, encourage best practices, and set an agenda of urgency.

Of the stakeholders who envision the REGPN as a coordinating network, almost all would like to see the REGPN create a library of case studies that shares lessons and methodologies for RE policy formulation and evaluation. The most important function of these case studies was considered to be high quality documentation and recommendation of feasible policy options. One-third of stakeholders elaborated on this idea, suggesting that these studies also identify common barriers and solutions, report the impact of implementation, and share best tools to measure progress. Two stakeholders say they hope this coordination will result in regional action plans.

Of the stakeholders who envision the REGPN as an information network, most want a clearinghouse of comprehensive, accurate, and up-to-date data for different regions that will help track the IAP progress of member countries and other relevant initiatives. Some additional functions of an information network were proposed by individual stakeholders. These included a database of experts, a live help desk, and the development of academic curriculum. Two stakeholders suggested that the REGPN hold local and regional training workshops.

One-fourth of respondents described the function of the REGPN in relation to the CSD, describing it with varying language: “The network should enliven the CSD”, “work with the CSD Secretariat”, “report to the CSD”, and “support the CSD- 14/15”. Similarly, one stakeholder hoped the REGPN could achieve permanent consultative status with the World Bank, assessing project proposals. Two stakeholders want the REGPN to achieve clear RE target commitments from the World Bank, IMF, and other multilateral organizations.

A clear divide arose amongst respondents, with regard to the involvement of the REGPN at the project level. Almost one-third of respondents felt strongly that the REGPN should or will have no choice to limit project support to data collection, policy studies, and outlining initiatives. A separate one-third of respondents thought the REGPN *should* identify and inspire opportunities for local initiatives, help mobilize the resources for local initiatives, provide tech support, and develop progress assessment guidelines. One justification given for project-level involvement was the need to bypass the bureaucracy of national governments. The remaining respondents did not voice a preference.

C. THEMATIC FOCI

Policy

Amongst stakeholders who envision the REGPN as a coordinating network, there was a near unanimous desire for the REGPN to concentrate on policy. While many respondents did not elaborate further, several suggested that in addition to identifying best policies, the REGPN should help stakeholders to create an enabling policy environment provide decision makers the tools to design and implement policies, and propose strategies for the removal of barriers.

Finance

Approximately half of respondents also mentioned the need for finance to be included as a theme. One stakeholder was opposed to the inclusion of finance, and the remaining stakeholders made no indication either way. In addition to the development and endorsement of successful financial tools, and the creation of guidelines for investment, several stakeholders would like the REGPN to foster a better understanding of market distortion and support initiatives to redirect them. Other objectives in the finance arena were selected by a handful of stakeholders. These objectives include working towards the internalization of external costs/benefits in energy accounting, analyzing economic methods to price energy systems, as well as exploring the role for venture capitalists, investment funds, insurers, and microfinance.

Technology

While no stakeholder expressed a desire to exclude technology from the list of thematic foci, it was mentioned by only one-fifth of respondents. The need to increase awareness and confidence in RE technology was the main justification provided. In addition to providing policy assessment, the stakeholders who mentioned technology would like case studies to include evaluation of renewable energy technology systems. These evaluations should serve to update stakeholders on technological advances and guide the adaptation of technologies to the local level.

Human Development

One-fifth of respondents would like poverty alleviation and rural development to be a central focus of the REGPN. The remaining stakeholders did not mention this theme.

Environment

One sixth of stakeholders consulted emphasized their desire for the network to highlight the importance of RE to environmental quality, making specific reference to climate change and water.

Miscellaneous

Individual stakeholders requested that additional issues be added to the list of thematic foci. These proposed themes include health, security, and urban planning.

D. NETWORK STRUCTURE and ORGANIZATION

MEMBERS

Member Categories

Virtually all respondents would like the network to include individuals and organizations from a variety of stakeholder groups, i.e. academia/research, private companies, and NGOs. Most would add to that list national governments, regions, and international organizations. Some would also include financiers (banks), trade unions, media, and religious communities. An extensive list of categories, it was generally argued, could ensure credibility and broad representation.

While some respondents would like the REGPN stakeholders to voluntarily become members, a majority prefer a system where members are accepted only after positive review by existing REGPN structures, or even on invitation.

With regard to private companies, some stakeholders (esp. NGOs) had reservations about extending membership to those not generally associated with renewable energy, e.g. BP, Shell etc. Others would like to allow or even welcome such companies, countering any perceived credibility risks with an unambiguous mission statement.

Membership Classes

A number of consulted stakeholders argued for different classes of memberships, resulting in a (rather exclusive) class of core members and a (more inclusive) class of associated members. The first could be more formal while the second could be more informal. The divide could be drawn either according to member activity (more vs. less committed), or according to the type of involvement (actively taking part vs. information exchange). Some also proposed an external advisory group.

Representation

Several stakeholders would like members to be representatives with a mandate for their "clientele", whereas some others would like to see them participate in their individual capacity. All agreed that the REGPN should provide a forum for its members to network and exchange views. Some respondents would like the network to develop a mechanism for retracting membership, to ensure that members do not receive without contributing.

Member Recruiting

A few stakeholders proposed referring to existing networks to engage members.

Membership Size

There was a general understanding that a trade-off exists between high representation (many members) and effectiveness (few members). Some suggested creating thematic circles or task forces along technical or regional criteria to increase effectiveness. Some argued for a maximum size.

PRIVATE SECTOR

Benefits to the private sector

Many stakeholders outlined benefits that involvement in THE REGPN would bring to the private sector. Some respondents suggested that the network should facilitate access to financing (from IFIs) for local private companies. Some expect companies to benefit from fostering partnerships between companies from developed countries (providing financing) and companies from developing countries (providing local infrastructure and workforce). Issues of special interest to private business may include pricing of energy (subsidies and externalities) as well as regulation and public incentives.

Mode of Working

While some stakeholders envision the REGPN as a network where internal debates lead to lobbying and influence *towards* governments and international organizations, others would like fruitful discussions between companies and policy makers happening *within* the network.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Secretariat

Virtually all stakeholders agreed that there should be a small and effective secretariat for the REGPN.

Governing Body

There was also widespread agreement on the necessity for some governing body (e.g. steering committee, executive committee, or operating board) which by some was proposed to be supported by an advisory board. A diversity of view was expressed regarding appropriate structure for such a governing body, both in size and content. While some held that representation should be divided regionally, others stressed the importance of representation from each of the various stakeholder groups, i.e. NGO, business, government.

Meetings

There was no agreement on the frequency of meetings. Some maintained that meetings should occur annually; others preferred biannual or tri-annual general assemblies, depending on budget among other considerations. It was suggested by some that these meetings be held in a different location each time. Some proposed that meetings of the REGPN should be held in conjunction with the events of other groups (CSD, UNEP...). It was further maintained that financial aid should be available to support travel costs where necessary.

Leadership

A few stakeholders (from business and international organizations) were in favor of "big faces"/VIPs in the leadership of the REGPN, expressing different ideas as to whom those people might be (politicians, professors, CEOs of RE companies).

UNIQUENESS OF THE REGPN – DIFFERENCE TO EXISTING STRUCTURES

Most stakeholders (from all categories) said that the REGPN would be different due to its informality and non-negotiated nature, providing for a safe forum for debating, brainstorming and exchanging ideas. The structure should facilitate access to key decision makers, so that the ideas could then be taken outside into the political lobbies (governments, IOs). Some mentioned the need for the REGPN to remain independent from IBRD, UNDP etc. It was also suggested that the REGPN should be kick-started by a government declaration.

FINANCING REGPN

Everyone agreed that funding is necessary for the REGPN. Mentioned financial needs included support for the dissemination of information (both on paper and online), particularly data collection, reports, policy studies, and other publications. Other expenses include the cost of organizing the meetings and events, maintaining the secretariat, transport aid etc. Membership fees were a commonly stated source of financial support, and could be required based on member categories, with governments or large companies expected to pay more than small NGOs or individuals. Countries and IOs were also put forward as potential contributors, with opposing views as to whether Germany should take on an especially large portion of the financing.

E. RELATIONSHIP to other fora, organizations, partnerships, etc.

THE REGPN AND CSD

Virtually every respondent agreed that the REGPN should in some form contribute to the CSD process, to make sure RE is sufficiently taken into account. This was considered especially important with regard to CSD 14/15) and in formalizing the Bonn Conference outcome into the formal channels, while still while making sure that the REGPN itself remains independent from UN bodies. It was also suggested that the REGPN could organize side events and enrich the CSD process by publicizing case studies and providing policy recommendations. Some also suggested that the REGPN could help put into practice some of the outcomes of the CSD.

REGPN AND OTHER NETWORKS

A strong majority of consultants agreed that the REGPN, because of its broad scope, should operate as an umbrella over different networks or an interface between them. The REGPN could help bring different initiatives together, coordinate the respective working fields, clarifying their focus in order to reduce overlaps and make their work more effective. The REGPN would thus increase the focus to RE in networks where this attention is lacking.

Some also proposed that the REGPN share with other fora the information and policy knowledge for designing projects, or strategy and tactics for influencing policy-makers. As a global network, the REGPN could also help link the global experiences to in-country-operations on the ground, facilitating the work of local networks.

OTHER NETWORKS AS MEMBERS

Many also argued for other networks to actually become members or associate members of the REGPN. These existing networks include continental organizations such as EREF, EREC, EWEA and research centers such as ECN, RISOE, EEG (here stated examples from Europe, likewise for other regions).

NO REPLICATIONS

Several respondents specifically stressed the necessity to avoid replications and competition with other networks. The follow-up on IAP commitments from renewables2004, is one specific niche activity appropriate for the REGPN, as it is not already being done.

REGPN AND DONORS

Interface between Donors and Applicants

Many consulted stakeholders recommended that the REGPN enhance cooperation between the various international and national donors. Also, the REGPN should help facilitate the acquisition of funding from donors to network members, especially with regard to the financing of IAP activities.

Shape Donor Activities or include Donors?

Some would like the REGPN to join forces with regional governments to pressure IFIs into stronger support for renewable energy. On the other hand, many respondents agreed with the concept paper, expressing a desire for IFIs to play a role in the REGPN, if not as members, then as external advisers.

Donor Funding

Several respondents would like to see international donors contribute to financing the REGPN. (secretariat etc)

F. YOUR INVOLVEMENT

Potential Partnerships

Virtually all stakeholders consulted were enthusiastic about becoming involved with the REGPN.

Benefits Offered

Most respondents offered very concrete help to the REGPN, in the form of (ranked, starting with most-mentioned):

- providing logistical aid, such as organization of conference and workshops, academic seminars, web hosting
- bringing-in the specific country/regional (policy) experience
- coordinating/managing regional ties for the REGPN
- building bridges to other networks
- offering financial, scientific and technical, or legal advice
- supporting data collection for studies and documentation
- taking REGPN-results out into the local or regional political sphere (lobbying)

Benefits Expected

The most important benefits expected from the REGPN were (ranked, starting with most-mentioned):

- a frank and open exchange forum, enabling knowledge management, global exchange of experiences and views
- giving power and credibility to access and shape local policies, approaching decision-makers, etc (lobbying support)
- helping the own organization to grow and providing financial support