



IREC Handbook

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GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF IREC

Initiated at the renewables2004 conference in Bonn, the International Renewable Energy Conference (IREC) is a high-level political conference series dedicated to renewable energy policy worldwide. Focusing exclusively on the renewable energy sector, the IREC is hosted by a government biennially and convened by REN21. Past IREC hosts are: South Korea (2019), Mexico (2017), South Africa (2015), Abu Dhabi (2013), India (2010), United States (2008), China (2005) and Germany (2004).

What the IREC Aims to Achieve

The IREC is a common multi-stakeholder platform for government, private sector and civil society leaders to jointly address the goal of advancing renewable energy and has provided the momentum for several leading initiatives. It is international in scope and thus is expected to be wide reaching in terms of the content and participation.

With the increasing acceptance of the central role renewables play in a sustainable, clean and healthy environment, it is also important that the IREC offer participants a unique angle on the renewable energy discussion. The aim is to exchange on issues that are currently trending, bring them into the national, regional and international sphere simultaneously.

Host Requirements

The selected host country must have a demonstrated commitment to renewable energy, e.g. strong renewable energy policy framework in the country. The host government must have the capacity, infrastructure and resources to accommodate a high-level conference for 1,500-2,000 participants. Small, developing countries may seek partners to assist with needed financial resources.

The IREC host is expected to provide or secure travel support to enable delegates from developing countries to attend and thus ensure broad, international participation.

To ensure continuity between the IRECs, REN21 supports the host country in the planning and organisation of the IREC. The host government agrees to provide the REN21 Secretariat with financial resources to carry out this role.

Structure of an IREC

The defining elements of an IREC are:

- Conference (programme and side events)
- Exhibition
- Site visits

- REN21 Steering Committee meeting back-to-back with the IREC

APPLICATION PROCESS

The application process has **four steps**:

1) Publishing of Call for Proposals (CfP)

A CfP to host an IREC is made available on REN21's website.

2) Submission of Proposal

The interested applicant submits a proposal called the *conference bid document*. This document is about 10 pages in length and responds to the criteria outlined in the Application guidelines

3) Evaluation of Proposal

All *conference bid documents* are assessed against the IREC selection criteria, ranked and evaluated by the Secretariat and REN21 Bureau. The top three, short-listed applicants are then invited to present their proposal. Short-listed candidates are informed via email.

4) Presentation of Proposal

Short-listed applicants are invited to “pitch”¹ their proposal via a (virtual) REN21 Steering Committee meeting where Committee members will ask questions. Depending on the Committee's assessment a scoping call or mission may be carried out before the final decision is made.

OVERVIEW OF DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

While development of an IREC is a collaborative process, there are key responsibilities assigned to each of the main partners.

- **Host government:**
 - Overall organisation of conference
 - Secure funding to host event
 - Identify conference service provider
 - Get buy-in for the conference from local/regional governments as well as partner countries in the region (e.g. in the case of South Africa: African Union; SADC Secretariat)

¹ “Pitch” refers to presenting the concept and content of the proposal document.

- Secure the participation of a significant number of national governments
 - Consider the establishment of a local organising committee, including national government departments and other key stakeholders, and define criteria for interaction with REN21
 - Establish MoU between host country and REN21 to jointly develop the IREC (draft available from REN21)
 - Ensure financial compensation to REN21 to carry out its activities
- **REN21:**
 - Establish an International Advisory Committee (IAC) and host its meetings on a frequency agreed on by the Parties.
 - Develop the IREC conference programme in collaboration with the host country
 - Facilitate the production of the IREC Conference Declaration and legacy
 - Promote the IREC at the global level through the REN21 network and its associated events.

Secondment to host country

To assist with planning and smooth communication between the host government and REN21 the secondment of a person to the host country ministry is recommended. The secondee's time should be divided between being based in the REN21 Secretariat and in the host country.

ESTABLISHMENT OF AN IAC

The International Advisory Committee (IAC) is responsible for providing over guidance on the substantive shape of the IREC and to ensure that the IREC retains an international renewable energy perspective.

The IAC is formed from members of REN21's Steering Committee (governments, intergovernmental organisations, NGOs, trade associations, research and academia), selected REN21 partners such as REEEP, former IREC hosts and host country representatives.

Communication with the IAC is predominately via email/conference call. Meetings are convened periodically back-to-back with international meetings or conferences. Members of the IAC volunteer their time and knowledge. It is an unpaid position.

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

The conference programme should touch on cross-cutting issues that affect renewable energy uptake as well provide an opportunity to discuss new/innovative development in the various, associated renewable energy technologies. While the IREC is an opportunity to present national and regional issues, the international context must also be addressed where relevant. Moreover, the conference should look to current thematic issues, e.g. linking to COP21 as for SAIREC, linking to the launch of Indian Solar Mission as was for DIREC, linking to the Chinese Renewable Energy law as for BIREC etc.

The conference programme should span three days and consist of:

- Opening session
- High level sessions (2-3 high-level panels) dedicated to current developments
- Parallel sessions looking at cross-cutting themes and emerging technologies
- Closing session with presentation of Declaration

The **opening session** serves as a platform for the host government to welcome delegates and to frame the renewable energy issue within the regional context. A short cultural programme within opening session is a nice way to link the technical and cultural elements. The closing session serves as the platform to present the IREC Declaration and to thank delegates for their participation.

The **parallel sessions** are an opportunity to address a particular topic in detail. The objective of the parallel sessions is to let participants directly engage in an issue through a moderated debate.

Each session is composed of a keynote speaker, a moderator and a panel of experts. Sessions typically run 90 minutes.

The session is structured around the issues which are outline in a supporting issue paper. The issue papers set the context for the various high-level and parallel sessions. Each paper provides participants with a concise overview of a given topic area. Pre-prepared questions—known as Challenge Questions—serve as the basis for the panel discussion within each parallel event. The production of these issue paper is coordinated by REN21.

The **conference programme** is developed in close cooperation between REN21 and the host country with strategic input from the IAC.

Once the programme content has been set, the organising committee and REN21 work collaboratively to identify speakers for each of the sessions. Upon agreement of the speaker's list, invitations are sent. It is important to ensure gender balance.

Speakers List

The selection of conference speakers is an important process as collectively the speakers frame the debate and drive audience participation with their comments. As such, the identification of speakers is done jointly between the host government and REN21. While this is time-consuming it is very important for a diverse, balanced slate of speakers, including gender and geographical balance.

A reserve list is also established to cover declines or last-minute cancellations. Additional invites go out to mutually agreed contacts from the reserve list as needed.

Speakers are invited via an invitation which contains the signature of a high-level ministry official. The signature of the Energy Minister is only required when inviting other Ministers (or as dictated by government protocol).

Issue Papers

An issue paper is prepared for each parallel session. Each paper should provide participants with a concise overview of a given topic area. Pre-prepared questions—known as Challenge Questions—serve as the basis for the panel discussion within each parallel event.

These papers can be prepared by REN21 or by various organisations which each coordinate the drafting of a specific issue paper. If organisations are drafting the issue papers then it is important that the responsible organisation consults with other groups, organisations etc., that are involved in the topic to ensure that the paper is representative in its presentation. Each lead organisation is responsible for carrying out a review process of the issue paper among key stakeholders before submitting it to the REN21 Secretariat. For issue papers where two organisations are identified as co-leaders, these organisations will work bilaterally to produce one issue paper, following the process outlined above.

CONFERENCE DECLARATION

The conference declaration serves to summarise the outcomes of the IREC. Ideally it should also propose an action/decision by the host government to increase the uptake of renewables in the country or region.

REN21 appoints an IREC declaration facilitator; in the past this role has been fulfilled by Mohamed El-Ashry and Irene Giner-Reichl. The process is lead jointly between a government appointed representative and the REN21 IREC declaration facilitator. A small group is typically charged with the drafting, sharing it within the relevant government offices as

necessary. Once an agreed draft is ready, comments are solicited from the IAC by REN21 and participating governments by the host government.

The final declaration draft is presented to the conference participants for comments, e.g. on the conference website, through the IREC app. The final version of the declaration is presented in the closing session of the IREC for approbation by the participants.

The host country then communicates the IREC declaration to appropriate international fora. Upload to conference website.

REGIONAL REPORT

A report that looks at the current status of renewables and energy efficiency in the region is an effective way to present the opportunities and barriers present in the IREC host region. Ideally such a report should be prepared in the year leading up to the IREC to ensure that the most up-to-date information is presented. The REN21 Secretariat is responsible for leading this activity. The report should be included in the conference delegate bags.

SIDE EVENTS

Side events are complementary to an IREC's main events. These events give stakeholders the possibility to present their current work, launch reports or shed light on a particular topic related to renewable energies. Participants can also discuss a topic or project in-depth. With this focus, side events are a great networking opportunity for interested stakeholders and ensure buy-in from a larger community to the IREC. Moreover, it gives organisations of the host country and region the possibility to present themselves.

Side events should take place in advance of main IREC conference agenda i.e., the day before the official opening on the IREC. It is not recommended to hold them during lunch breaks or in the evening as it is difficult to coordinate and detracts from the parallel sessions.

Exhibitors can also hold side events within their exhibition space. Side event organisers are completely responsible for the structure and content of their event and for inviting speakers and participants. It is important to make it clear to side event organisers that they have to invite their networks to their side events. This requires that the time slot is allocated in advanced so that they can communicate this.

Side events typically run 90 minutes. All side events are open to all IREC participants. There is no defined structure to a side event; examples include

- Keynote speech, moderated panel discussing a specific topic, Q&A
- Presentation of a project, Q&A
- Various presentations with a moderator guiding the session, Q&A

Side event organisers are solely responsible for their event. This includes:

- Preparation of a detailed description, content, detailed programme ahead of the conference
- Invitation of speakers and panellists and ensuring that they are registered to the main conference
- Preparation of necessary content or promotional material
- Side event organisers should promote their event using their networks. Other than that side events are promoted via the official IREC webpage

Side event rooms should provide basic audio-visual equipment, including computer and microphones. Each room should have a technician to provide technical support. If side event organisers require additional technical equipment, they need to organise and pay for these directly. Typically, the conference venue is able to connect the organisers with necessary personnel. Any event-related catering is the responsibility of the side event organiser.

REN21 is responsible for soliciting, selecting and coordinating the organisation of the side events based on the outcome of a call for submission of side events with a cut-off date 6 months prior to the IREC. REN21 will keep the host country and conference organisers updated on progress and will run the final programme past the host country. The final side event programme is now included in the conference programme.

SITE VISITS

Site visits provide an opportunity to demonstrate the applications of renewables in the country. Identification and organisation of the site visits are the responsibility of the host country organising committee.

HOST OUTREACH

Opening Networking Cocktail

In order to welcome participants to the host country and to facilitate networking, an opening cocktail should be held. Using national/regional thematic elements is recommended as is local music.

Coffee breaks and lunches

Coffee breaks and lunchtime provide great opportunities for people to network. Enough time should be allowed over the course of the day for these to occur.

Coffee/tea/refreshments should be provided free of charge at set times over the course of the day. Stations should be set up around the venue so that people can quickly and easily pick-up refreshments.

Ideally lunch should be offered free-of-charge to participants and provided in such a way that people can quickly access the food to maximise networking during the lunchtime period.

It is not advisable to have a formal lunch arrangement where participants are required to sit down and be served. Moreover, there should not be any speeches held in the lunch area. Leave the time free for people to network, chat, catch up on work etc.

VIP/Gala Dinner

A high-level dinner should be held over the course of the IREC. This event is a good way to acknowledge the contribution of the various speakers and the presence of attending and host governments.

SPONSORSHIP

Sponsors can help off-set the cost of the conference by providing in-kind support (transport vehicles, printing and promotional supplies, food etc.), sponsoring a cocktail or dinner or in the form of a direct financial contribution.

The host country is responsible for securing sponsorship. Sponsorship packets and an outreach strategy need to be developed 1 year ahead of the IREC.

With direct financial contributions typically, there are four to five levels, each one progressively more selective and offering more advantages to the sponsor:

- Silver: eight sponsors
- Gold: four sponsors
- Platinum: two sponsors
- Diamond: one sponsor

COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

Strategic promotion of the IREC is important and therefore a communication strategy should be developed alongside the conference programme and logistics.

The main elements of an IREC communication strategy include:

- Establishing a communications team, drawing on communication members of the host country the IAC and the REN21 team
- Mapping out roles and responsibilities of communication team
- Process for branding the event including development of a conference logo
- Identification of media partners to carry stories in the lead-up to, during and after IREC
- Developing a “story” around IREC
 - Why it is being held
 - What it hopes to accomplish
 - Who can get involved
- Preparing outreach material
- Engaging with the host city to promote the IREC through its outreach material, the use of street banners etc.
- Creating website, social media presence, conference app
- Hosting of one press conferences (opening of the IREC)

Logo and Tagline Development

A logo is created for each IREC. The logo should visually represent the field of renewables. An accompanying tagline is recommended as it provides a concise statement for what the IREC aims to achieve. Logo and tag line development is the responsibility of the host country with support from REN21.

Press Releases

Press releases serve to inform the press about the conference and provide key facts to be used in news articles. Two press releases should be prepared by the IREC communications team: one to announce the opening of the IREC; one to announce the IREC declaration and closing of the event. These joint press releases are sent out by the IREC host as well as REN21 to their respective mailing lists. These press releases should accompany the two scheduled press conferences.

Conference App

A conference application (“conference app”) is a good way of centralising key conference documentation in one place. Via the app, participants can access the IREC agenda, participant list, daily bulletin, conference photos. The conference app can be designed to offer participants a wide range of options. **The conference app however should be a complement to the conference programme, not a substitute** (it is important to have a paper copy of the conference programme)

CONFERENCE REPORTING

Photographer

A conference photographer documents the IREC. While it is important to take pictures of the high-level events, presentations and exhibition, photos that convey the networking and informal conversations are also needed.

Daily Bulletins

Daily bulletins inform the conference participants as to what occurred the previous day. They also serve as a summary archive of the various sessions, side events and parallel activities.

A conference reporting team collectively reports on each of the conference sessions. From this information a concise, two-page bulletin is produced. This bulletin is then made available on the conference website and distributed in limited copies to participants the following day.

The draft bulletin must be submitted to REN21 for review the same evening. Furthermore, the conference reporters draft one PowerPoint slide including notes for each session as well as for the opening and closing sessions.

Conference Report

The conference report serves as an archive of the IREC. Ideally the team contracted to produce the daily bulletin is also contracted to produce the conference report. The report should contain the following elements:

- Full text of the conference declaration
- Introductions from host government and organisers
- Schedule of the parallel sessions and side events
- Short overviews of high-level panels and parallel sessions
- Short text on the exhibitions
- Use of photos to capture the themes and feel of the IREC

ON SITE CONFERENCE LOGISTICS

Conference Venue

The venue selected needs to be able to hold 2,000 – 5,000 people via a variety of plenary and breakout rooms. The rooms must be accessible to people with reduced mobility. Exhibition space is also recommended, although not required. The exhibition and sponsors are what ensure the financial income for the IREC host.

Venue requirements:

- minimum of one plenary room that can accommodate 1,500 people
- five parallel session rooms
- a minimum of two additional side event rooms
- exhibition area
- operation rooms
- media briefing room
- speaker briefing rooms,
- rooms that can be booked for bi-laterals, VIP lounge, etc.

Ideally the rooms should be in close proximity to each other to facilitate logistics (organiser) and networking (participants). Rooms that are enclosed (walls, ceilings and sound proofed) should be guaranteed.

The design plans for the IREC space should be circulated to the organising team (host country and REN21) for comment to ensure that all necessary spaces are accounted for.

The number of days for which the venue should be booked should be clearly defined before signature of contract (exhibition requires a minimum of two days for build- up and one break-down day).

Sessions can be video, or audio recorded but it is not necessary

Speaker Briefing

A speaker briefing is held prior to each parallel session to ensure that speakers are comfortable and ready to engage in their session. The agenda should be designed to allow for at least 30 minutes before each session for this briefing to take place.

Signage

Signage should be placed throughout the conference venue directing participants to various venues. Signs should be clear and easy to read, using the colours of the IREC logo as the palette. Clear signage for registration, delegate bag collection and rooms is needed.

Hospitality during IREC

Food and coffee stations should be distributed around the exhibition to facilitate quick access to services during coffee/tea and lunch breaks. Ideally these should be provided free of charge.

Exhibition

An exhibition hall provides the host government the opportunity to generate a revenue stream through the selling of exhibition space. Availability and costing of exhibition space should be widely communicated one year ahead of the IREC. Outreach via embassy briefings is a good way to secure international participation.

Configuration of the exhibition subject to host country wishes and can range from 40 exhibitors (SAIREC) to 700 (DIREC). As most companies have a long planning horizon, the IREC exhibition should be advertised 1 year in advance.

Registration

A VIP registration area is recommended

Conference programme

A summary version of the conference programme (hardcopy) should be available for distribution.

Speaker gifts

Gifts can be given to speakers to thank them for their participation, but they are not necessary. If gifts are given, they should be handed out at the end of each session as part of the closing remarks by the moderator.

Speaker gifts need to be:

- identified, purchased and ready for distribution before the start of the conference
- reflective of the host country (remind the speaker of the event)
- manageable in size and weight (transport home)

Partner Offices

Separate office space consisting of tables, chairs, printer, photocopies and wi-fi are to be provided to the conference organising team and REN21. Additional meeting and VIP rooms should also be made available.

TIMELINE OVERVIEW

What	Number of months in advance of opening	Who
Draft Memorandum of Understanding	21 months	REN21
Set-up International Advisory Committee (IAC)	17 months	REN21
Start preparation of regional report	17 months	REN21
Design IREC logo	13 months	Host govt
Develop website incl. registration function	13 months	Host govt
Agree on conference venue & room layout	13 months	Host govt, REN21
IREC Communication Plan	13 months	Host govt, REN21
Agree upon conference programme structure	13 months	REN21, Host govt
Develop sponsorship packages	13 months	Host govt
Advertise conference & exhibition	12 months	Host govt
Invite ministers from other countries (via Embassies)	12 months	Host govt
Plan site visits	12 months	Host govt
Manage issue paper production	12 months	REN21, Host govt
Issue call for side event applications	10 months	REN21
Identify high-level speakers	10 months	REN21, Host govt
Manage speaker invitation and liaison process	7 months	Host govt, REN21
Publish electronic conference programme	7 months	REN21, Host govt
Establish IREC declaration committee	7 months	REN21, Host govt
Selection of side events	7 months	REN21, Host govt
Final phase of conference logistics (weekly conference calls)	7 months	Host govt, REN21
Circulate draft conference declaration	4 months	Host govt, REN21
Issue Gala Dinner Invitations	1 month	Host govt, REN21