

Makerere to host first regional renewable energy centre

Makerere University's College of Engineering, Design, Art and Technology (CEDAT), is privileged to host the first ever Centre of excellence for East African Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (EACREEE). Launched by the Minister (designate) of Energy and Mineral Development Hon. Eng. Irene Muloni on 11th June 2016, the Centre will contribute towards increased access to modern, affordable, sustainable and reliable energy services in Uganda and the East African region.

The Centre of excellence for East African Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (EACREEE) was established by the partner member states of the East African Community (EAC) with support from the Austrian Development Agency and United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) with an aim of making sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) a reality in 2030. The center is based at Makerere University's College of Engineering, Design, Art and Technology (CEDAT) and operates through a network of National Focal Institutions among all East African States.

According to the Principal of Makerere University College of Engineering, Design, Art and Technology Assoc. Prof. Henry Alinaitwe, EACREEE is geared towards increased access to energy security and mitigation of negative externalities of energy systems (such as pollution) by creating an enabling environment for renewable energy and energy efficiency markets and investments.

Assoc. Prof. Henry Alinaitwe said that the centre will also promote all appropriate and sustainable renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies, promote small-scale and medium-scale hydro power projects, and Biofuel projects which prove to be sustainable and liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) cooking projects.

"EACREEE will also support and execute Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency activities and projects which cover one or more EAC Partner States focusing primarily on activities and projects with regional impact or national projects which demonstrate high potential for scaling-up or regional replication," he said.

The centre activities will be geared towards achieving the following outcomes

- Effective regional RE&EE promotion agency created and managed
- Policy legal and incentive frameworks to promote RE&EE aspects developed and implemented
- Capacity of the local industry and business sector on various RE&EE aspects strengthened and applied

- Availability of investment and market data, awareness and advocacy on RE&EE are strengthened
- Investments in RE&EE infrastructure, services and business are mobilized and implemented.

While launching the centre, the Minister of Energy and Mineral Development Hon. Eng. Irene Muloni said adequate renewable energy is key in promoting industrialization and subsequently achieving Uganda's middle income status by 2020. She therefore said that the creation of this facility will support the efforts to realize this target.

“Majority of Ugandans are in the rural areas and they rely on bio mass including charcoal and agricultural waste for energy. Fortunately, 85% of the energy Uganda relies on is renewable and thus need to fully tap into its potential. Only a few of the population are connected to the electricity power and this remains a major constraint to industrial activities particularly manufacturing,” she stated.

In a bid to counter these shortfalls, Minister (designate) Muloni said the regional strategy is working towards wider penetration of renewable energy through its Northern Corridor Integration and Standardized High Voltage projects.

The EAC Deputy Secretary General Jessica Ariyo thanked the Austrian Development Agency and United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) plus the Government of Uganda for their continued support toward the development of the centre to advance science and technology in Uganda when she said that,

“The center is a milestone in the integration process and needs to be taken seriously. We hope that this will facilitate a dialogue and exchange of ideas between stakeholders in the private sector within the EAC member states.”

Speaking on behalf of the Director, the Head of office -Austrian Development Agency Mr. Jean Buckley said that Austria was motivated to join EAC in establishing EACREEE due to the similar challenges and conditions both institutions face geographically and economically.

“The two institutions' efforts are geared towards reduction in dependence on fossil energies through creating ways in which renewable energy can be developed and applied by the affected countries through institutional capacity development,” said Buckley.

Describing industry and energy as important sectors, the Director General of United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) Mr. Phillipe Scott said that the two sectors should stand alone if countries need to achieve sustainable development.

Mr. Phillipe Scott said that Member states should stand for inclusive and sustainable development if they want to achieve industrial development.

“This is what UNIDO is up to and I believe we are not the only ones in the race. The African Union adopted this. And in October 2015, the UN concluded that the general assembly of industries that anyone who wants to involve in energy activities should stand out for sustainable development. It is also important to note the COP21 in Paris last year 2015 agreed to encourage countries engage in better use of energy,” he said.

Presenting the historical background of the Centre, the Permanent Secretary for Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development Ms. Prisca Bonabantu said that the decisions to designate CEDAT as a center of excellence was arrived at by the 33rd meeting of Council of Ministers in Arusha- Tanzania on 29th February 2016.

“We chose CEDAT because of the number of innovations it has made in the area of renewable energy and energy efficiency. We have hope in the experience and dedication of Makerere University’s College of Engineering, Design and Technology staff, the objectives of the centre will be realized,” she said.

In a speech read by the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration Prof. Banarbas Nawangwe, the Makerere University Vice Chancellor Prof. John Ddumba-Ssentamu said that the university is ready to promote all appropriate and sustainable renewable energy and energy efficiency across East African region.

“The university has championed research in renewable energy and energy efficiency. We have over the years done solar testing for different companies, the prototype vehicle produced by students and former students of this university are powered by solar energy. I can therefore confidently say that the faith in designating CEDAT as a centre of excellence is not misplaced,” said the Vice Chancellor.

The launch was climaxed by an amazing exhibition in which entrepreneurs, staff and students of CEDAT showcased their numerous innovation like their first ever emission free- solar power bus Kayooa which was available for a drive.