

The 4th IEF-OFID Symposium on Energy Poverty

“Energy Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa: Options for Closing the Gap”

2-3 May 2019- Cape Town, South Africa

Opening Statement

Mr. Belkacem OUZROUROU

On behalf of

Dr. Abdulhamid ALKHALIFA, Director-General, OFID

Excellency Minister of Energy, South Africa,

Excellency Secretary General, IEF,

Excellency Secretary General, APPO,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning,

On behalf of Dr Abdulhamid AlKhalifa, Director-General of the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID), I would like to welcome you to this 4th IEF-OFID Symposium on Energy Poverty.

I would like also to thank the Government of South Africa for hosting this event in the beautiful city of Cape Town and for the assistance kindly provided for its organization.

Today’s meeting is the result of the joint efforts by colleagues in IEF and OFID and builds upon the long-standing partnership between the two organizations in the fight against energy poverty. Previous co-organized three events took place in Johannesburg in 2009, Vienna in 2011 and Tunis in 2017.

This fourth edition of the Symposium is titled “Energy poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa: Options for closing the gap”. This indicates that energy poverty remains current and we are all here to exchange knowledge, experiences, and ideas on how we can better contribute to addressing this important issue.

It is obvious and well known to all that poor and unreliable access to modern energy is one of the most important factors hampering the materialization of the great development potential of Africa. Indeed, two thirds of the population of the continent

(around 640 m) do not have access to electricity and almost half still rely on biomass and do not have access to clean energy sources for cooking.

Sustainable access to reliable and affordable energy is key for overcoming poverty and improving the living conditions of the poor. It will allow people to have greater employment opportunities and an improved quality of basic social services like education and health as well as safe water and sanitation facilities, etc.

On the international development agenda, energy is well recognized as one of the key indicators of sustainable development through a clear and specific SDG, which is the SDG 7 “Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all”.

Now that we have the political will, it is important to put in place the most efficient ways and means to, successfully, implement SDG7. These include, among others, financing, capacity building, regulatory frameworks, policy reforms, strategies, programs, etc.

In this regard, I would like to highlight OFID’s efforts to the alleviation of energy poverty in its partner countries worldwide and more specifically in Africa. OFID has, during the last decade only (2009-2018), committed a total of over USD 3.7 billion to the noble cause of eradicating energy poverty. Africa benefitted about USD 2.2 billion in support of more than one hundred energy projects in 24 Countries.

These efforts by OFID and similar undertakings by others have made significant progress in reducing energy poverty on the continent, although there is still, a long way to go. It is also worth noting that there is more to alleviating energy poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa than simply providing funds. This is why, we need to create more synergies and develop joint resources by working with bilateral, regional and multilateral development institutions and many other stakeholders.

There is no “one-size-fits-all” solution to the problem of energy poverty. Technical solutions exist. These need to be tailored to the conditions of each situation, and all energy sources should be considered. The ultimate objective is to contribute to energy poverty eradication in the most efficient and cost effective way.

I am sure that during this symposium, our eminent speakers and experts will, today and tomorrow, shed light on several related critical issues.

We all look forward to fruitful discussions.

Thank you for your kind attention.