

Mauritania solar installation

Mauritania's Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development, Abdessalam Mohamed Saleh, and the African Development Bank's Deputy Managing Director for North Africa, Malinne Blomberg, have signed financing agreements totaling US\$289.5 million for two energy sector projects. These projects encompass solar power generation, transnational electricity interconnection, and rural electrification.

Present at the ceremony were Nany Ould Chrougha, the Minister of Energy, Oil, and Mines, Mohamed Mahmoud Sid'Elemine, Managing Director of SOGEM, and Ousmane Tall, Managing Director of SOMELEC. The funding comprises loans and grants aimed at executing the 225 kV Mauritania-Mali electricity interconnection and solar power plant development (PIEMM) alongside the project to boost productive and energy investments for rural area sustainability (RIMDIR). The PIEMM, as part of the Desert to Power Initiative, entails establishing a 225 kV electricity link between Mauritania and Mali.

The initiative aims to construct solar power plants and install a 1,373-kilometer high-voltage transmission line with a capacity of 600 MW, enhancing solar energy output and ensuring electricity access for all in both nations. Mauritania secures funding through a \$272 million loan from the African Development Fund and a \$1.5 million grant from the Green Climate Fund, marking the largest financing ever provided by the African Development Bank to Mauritania.

The RIMDIR initiative, supported by a \$16 million grant from the Sustainable Energy Fund for Africa (SEFA), focuses on rural electrification in 40 localities in southeastern Mauritania. It includes the installation of hybrid mini photovoltaic power plants, linking them to villages via connecting lines through a public-private partnership (PPP). Additionally, the project will enhance value-added activities, particularly in the food cold chain (meat, milk, and vegetables) and agri-food processing sectors.

“There can be no sustainable, diversified economic growth without high-quality, reliable electricity that is accessible to all. Within this framework, the government has drawn up ambitious programs seeking to guarantee access to electricity for all citizens by 2030, and this requires the optimal exploitation of the energy sources available in the country, to which this financing from the African Development Bank will contribute,” said Mr. Abdelssalam Mohamed Saleh.

“Today we are signing financing agreements that pave the way for Mauritania's energy transition. The two projects will improve people's daily lives with new opportunities for green growth, sustainable investment and jobs. They attest to the excellence of our relations with Mauritania, which they help to strengthen,” said Mrs Blomberg.

For over fifty years, the African Development Bank has been engaged in Mauritania across key development sectors such as agriculture, governance, water and sanitation, energy, mining, private sector, transport, and

social welfare.

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Energy is a priority for poverty reduction in Mauritania, according to its Accelerated Growth and Shared Prosperity Strategy. As a result, Mauritania's government is attempting to boost the economy by expanding its electricity supply and encouraging investment in renewable energy.

The West African country is endowed with substantial renewable energy resources, especially solar, making for an inviting atmosphere for a variety of initiatives and projects in the sector.

The African Development Bank Group's Board of Directors recently approved a \$6 million grant to kick off the first phase of the Desert to Power West Africa Regional Energy Program. The Bank's Desert to Power initiative aims to reshape the Sahel, in which Mauritania is included, by harnessing the region's vast solar potential.

The grant money will go to the West African Power Pool (WAPP) to conduct pre-feasibility studies for the construction of the Sahel Transmission Backbone, which will connect regional solar parks in all five countries. It comes from the African Development Fund's 15 (ADF-15) Regional Operations Envelope. As part of an Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Regional Mini-Grid Program, the Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE) of the ECOWAS will receive funding to enhance decentralized energy systems. The board gave their approval on July 1, 2021.

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