

Opening remarks
by

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International Renewable Energy Agency

at the
7th Session of the IRENA Assembly

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Thank you very much, Mr. President,

Mr. President

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is truly once again a great pleasure, on my own behalf but also on behalf of the IRENA secretariat, to welcome you all to this seventh session of the IRENA Assembly in our beautiful host city of Abu Dhabi. I would like to begin by congratulating His Excellency Mr. Mario Giro, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy, on his election as President of this Assembly. Italy has been a strong supporter of the Agency from the very beginning, and your election, your excellency, exemplifies its commitment to IRENA and its mission. Your statement this morning sets out an ambitious vision, and we look forward to working with you and others over the coming two days and the year ahead.

I also want to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Vice Presidents of this Assembly: The Dominican Republic, represented by H.E. Antonio Isa Conde, Minister of Energy and Mines; Indonesia, represented by H.E. Mr. Rida Mulyana, Director General for New and Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation; Jordan, represented by H.E. Ibrahim Hassan Saif, Minister

of Energy and Mineral Resources; and Morocco, represented by H.E. Abderrahim El Hafidi, Secretary-General at the Department of Energy, Mines, Water and Environment. I would also like to extend a sincere welcome to the distinguished delegates gathered here representing 158 countries, the European Union and 140 organisations and other entities. Finally, we also have members of the media in this room who I would also like to welcome, as they have become valuable allies in disseminating the positive message of renewable energy.

We have what promises to be an exceptionally rich and engaging Assembly session ahead of us, with a record participation of over a 1,100 delegates, including 3 Heads of State and Government, and around 65 Ministers and high-level officials registered. I would, in this regard, like to particularly warmly welcome HE Gaston Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, HE Baron Waqa, President of Nauru, and HE Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Last year, the Agency welcomed its 150th Member, and a further 30 countries are in the process of accession to the organisation. IRENA has developed near universal membership at an unparalleled speed, and this means that our Agency has at its fingertips a wealth of knowledge and experience that allows our work to expand in size and scope, reaching new stakeholders and bringing cutting-edge evidence and analysis to decision-makers all over the world.

We meet at a time of profound change. The energy transformation is fuelled by a remarkable surge in renewables that is driven by markets, cost reductions and technological innovation, and whose momentum is growing. Renewable energy is now also firmly at the centre stage of global efforts to meet climate and sustainable development objectives, and is becoming the preferred source of energy for an ever-growing number of governments, businesses and consumers around the world.

The speed and scale of this energy transformation calls, more than at any time before, for a strengthened global cooperation, through concrete action and initiatives, to seize its opportunities and grapple with the changes and challenges that it brings.

Our Assembly is an opportunity to do just this, and in the coming days, the knowledge and experience that will be shared among us will contribute to shaping our common sustainable energy future.

Yesterday, we held consultations with the Small Island Developing States and countries from South East Europe to see how best to support their efforts to accelerate renewable energy deployment. IRENA's Legislators' Forum examined the latest trends in renewable energy legislation and policies, and we will shortly hear about the results of these meetings.

Today, and tomorrow, two Ministerial Roundtables will provide an opportunity for peer-to-peer exchange on high priority issues to many countries, such as the transformation of the power sector and the scaling-up of off-grid renewable energy solutions to achieve universal energy access, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These Roundtables present an opportunity for candid, open discussions that will help IRENA better understand and meet your needs as Members in the future.

We will also have a number of targeted programmatic and strategic discussions, to provide the Assembly with the latest information on IRENA's work and to gather feedback from our Members, so that we can remain responsive to your needs. These include discussions on investment pathways to advance Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris agreement, on the role of innovation in the decarbonisation of the energy sector, and on corporate sourcing of renewables. And tomorrow evening, as has become traditional, we have an event in the atrium of our headquarters building in Masdar City of a celebratory character, which I am sure you will enjoy tremendously as it will bring new ideas and new initiatives to the table.

For us in the Secretariat, the Assembly is a highlight; it is an opportunity to showcase the work and progress of the Agency in the past year. But it also an

invigorating experience to see the international community gather and share your plans, experiences and knowledge, as well as challenges and concerns, and to develop innovative solutions together.

In all of this, since the inception of our headquarters in Abu Dhabi, the support of our host country, the UAE, has been central to achieving in achieving the level of success and ambition that we have been able to, and I am very grateful for that continued support. Your excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, this is the essence of international cooperation, and in this spirit I once again welcome you to the seventh session of the IRENA Assembly.

I thank you Mr. President.