

## Honiara solar energy policy

Honiara, Solomon Islands, 6 February 2024 – The Renewables Readiness Assessment (RRA): Solomon Islands undertaken by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) in collaboration with the Ministry of Mines, Energy and Rural Electrification (MMERE), through the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Lighthouses Initiative (LHI) finds that renewable energy presents multifaceted opportunities to improve the quality of life and to reduce fossil fuels dependence in Solomon Islands.

With an electricity access rate of 76%, the Solomon Islands continues to grapple with energy security and sustainability, especially in the outer islands and remote communities. These challenges are compounded by rapid population growth and a high poverty ranking. Fossil fuel imports, which currently sustain a substantial portion of the nation’s energy needs, pose a significant financial burden. The new report finds that accelerated deployment of renewables and the uptake of energy transition innovative solutions in the Solomon Islands can address the challenges.

To drive action towards accelerated energy transition, the government already aspires to achieve 100% electricity access and zero emissions by 2050. Understanding the multi-benefits of the transition, the government seeks to enhance the Solomon Islanders quality of life by fostering employment, income generation, improved healthcare, improved access to information and communication technology (ICT), healthcare, education and strengthen agri-food including fisheries and water security and the expansion of the tourism sector.

The Assessment highlights the untapped potential of renewables coupled with energy efficiency interventions and other innovative solutions can offer the country significantly cheaper alternatives to imported fossil fuels. Currently, 0.34 MW of solar energy capacity and 4.13 MW of hydropower already contribute to the country’s energy mix.

In launching the report, Mr. Daniel Rove, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Mines, Energy and Rural Electrification stated, “The country commits to restructure its current electricity delivery approach by imposing the right policy direction to our context to reform our governance over the sector. This is to encourage the right partnerships, investments and innovations on harnessing our renewable energy resources for the sustainable socio-economic development of the country.”

The Solomon Islands’s forward strategy recommended by this report involves significant investments and collaborative partnerships across various sectors. The Assessment outlines seven priority areas, including restructuring the electricity grid; setting technical standards for resilient off-grid renewable energy; creating innovative funding mechanisms; developing markets for electric mobility; coordinating renewable energy implementation in key sectors; promoting energy efficiency; and fostering partnerships for innovative solutions.

The Renewable Energy Strategy and Investment Plan (RE-SIP) lays out the Solomon Island's renewable energy targets and policy outcome and strategies and financial requirements for achieving a sustainable energy future for all Solomon Islanders.

The Solomon Islands is blessed with potential renewable energy resources however most of these resources have not been exploited due to a number of barriers and challenges including the geographical locations of these resources which are far away from available demand. In addition, there have been limited opportunities in terms of financial and technical resources and capacities, our cultural and social issues to enhance the use of these resources. These challenges have contributed to a low percentage of total populations having access to electricity.

The Energy Division of the Ministry of Mines, Energy and Rural Electrification is to coordinate the effective deliverables of the RE-SIP and the SINEP policy outcomes for rural electrification while the state owned utility, the Solomon Islands Electricity Authority will coordinate the implementation of renewable energy options for the urban areas, including its outstations in the provinces.

Again I need to reiterate the need for the activation of a national Energy Advisory Committee, comprised of high -level multi-sectoral members tasked with assessing, monitoring the progress of the RE-SIP including other energy strategies and investment plans and to achieve the overarching focus area of our National Development Strategy; building better lives for all Solomon Islands.

It is with great pleasure to know that this RE -SIP when implemented effectively will contribute to improving the livelihoods of all the people of the Solomon Islands through the access to sustainable, appropriate and affordable energy services and therefore I urge all stakeholders and those that have interest in this RE -S IP to provide support, guidance and advice throughout its implementation and its future continuation.

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