

EWEA Interview

INTERVIEW WITH ALFONSO PECORARO SCANIO – ITALIAN MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT

1. On 9 March 2007, EU Heads of State adopted a binding target for 20% renewables by 2020. The next step involves developing national plans to effectively reach this target. The European Commission is preparing a document in which national objectives will be set and then negotiated with each member state. What do you expect for Italy and what would the potential target be for 2020, bearing in mind that Italy performed well last year?

With regard to the production of electricity in Italy, about 16% of the total comes from renewable energy sources, mainly from big hydroelectric plants. However, in the fields of thermal energy and the development of new renewable energy sources, our country is not as advanced as other European countries. This is a problem on the one hand, but equally, it allows us to develop other related sectors, such as construction.

At present, it is difficult to forecast the outcome of negotiations within the EU for sharing the renewables target. However, it is clear that Italy requires a range of serious policies to contain its emissions, since they have increased by 13%, instead of reducing by 6.5%, as foreseen by the Kyoto Protocol. In order to make up for this, in the financial plan for 2007, our government brought in measures and resources to cut emissions and strongly promote the production of clean energy, sustainable transport and energy efficiency in industry and construction. This amounts to €600 million over three years for the rotating Kyoto fund or €270 million over three years for sustainable transport. The government has also put environment and climate change issues high up on its agenda in order to work towards its target for 25% of energy to be derived from renewable sources by 2011.

2. Italy is currently a major energy importer. How will Italy address this issue in the coming decade? What role will renewables play?

There is a need to act on both the demand and supply sides, in order to achieve two results: decrease consumption and waste by at least 20% and diversify production sources, mainly by boosting the production of clean energy.



Natural gas will also play an important role as a transitional energy source towards an economy based on renewable sources. In order to reduce Italy's dependency on countries that traditionally export gas through pipelines, the government has installed several liquefied natural gas terminals. However, long-term policy will clearly need to focus on renewable energies, as well as by investing in innovation and new technologies, such as solar thermal, geothermal and by taking advantage of the progress made in the nanotechnology sector.

Due to Italy's extensive coastline (8000km long), I also believe that we should seriously consider the use of marine energy in our energy policy. And finally, with "Conto Energia", Italy is pursuing a strategy to increase solar energy production 100 fold - from 30 to 3000 MW.

- 3. As the keynote speaker at the European Wind Energy Conference, what concrete answers will you give to the European wind industry, which is calling for clear guidelines for market participants regarding the future direction of renewable electricity in Europe. In the current discussions, uncertainty about the existing legal framework for renewable electricity should be avoided. This is crucial for the European wind power industry, particularly with regard to the successful 2001 Directive on Electricity from Renewable Energy.**

Firstly, the scheme for the funding of renewable energies (Cip6) has to overcome the problem of the so-called "assimilated" energies (in Italy, incinerators, activities for carbon processing and oil waste are included in the energies "assimilated" within renewables), which have already taken up a significant amount of resources intended for the development of clean energies. I also believe that the Green Certificate system needs to be completely re-evaluated.

As far as wind energy is concerned, my offices, in collaboration with the Ministry of Economic Development and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, are working on a draft document to provide national guidelines, which will detail potential locations for the development of new wind farms.

Overall, I believe that a common sense approach and the ability to develop clean energy, while respecting the environment are paramount in a country of such rich natural beauty as Italy.



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