



PRAISE FOR DIALOGUE'S FOCUS ON ENERGY TRANSITION AND SUSTAINABILITY

By H.E. Henk Kamp,
Minister of Economic Affairs of the Netherlands

The 15th International Energy Forum in Algiers is taking place at a time of substantial and fundamental change in the energy domain. Prices are relatively low on the oil and gas markets, due to the combination of high production levels and modest global economic growth. At the same time, many countries are stepping up their efforts to increase the share of renewables. Their aim is to improve the sustainability of their energy systems and reduce CO₂ emissions from fuel combustion, which is a significant contributor to global warming.

On 12 December 2015, 195 countries signed the Paris Agreement under the auspices of the United Nations. This climate deal contains key goals, such as keeping global warming well under two degrees and achieving a balance between greenhouse gas emissions and carbon capture and storage in the second half of this century. The Netherlands and the other EU member states have welcomed the agreement.

In its Energy Report published in January 2016, the Dutch government confirmed its participation in the global effort to develop a low-carbon energy economy that is safe, reliable and affordable. The Energy Report is based on the existing European climate ambitions, but the Paris Agreement may result in these ambitions being raised further, which may have implications for the Netherlands. Through cooperation and ambitious agreements, the Netherlands and the other EU member states will together be able to achieve a significant reduction in greenhouse gases. An efficient European energy market will improve the affordability, reliability and sustainability of our energy supply.

Following up on the 2013 Energy Agreement for Sustainable Growth, concluded by the Dutch government and around 40 companies and civil society organisations, the Netherlands is already stepping up investment in renewables, with a view to increasing the share of renewables in total energy consumption from 5.8 per cent today to 14 per cent in 2020 and 16 per cent in 2023. Various projects will be carried out to achieve this goal, including the development of offshore wind farms, for which the first contract was recently awarded.

The transition to a low-carbon energy supply that is safe, reliable and affordable will affect everyone – in the Netherlands, in Europe and in the rest of the world. As such, it is a challenge to be taken up by all: members of the public, businesses, government and non-governmental organisations. The Energy Report therefore invited Dutch stakeholders to participate in the Energy Dialogue held over the past few months. Participants were asked to devise a vision of the future and suggest steps to be taken in the various energy sectors. The Energy Dialogue has thus helped to shape the Netherlands' energy transition. Later in 2016, the points that have emerged from the Energy Dialogue will be used in drafting our Energy Agenda for the coming years.

Following up on the Paris Agreement is a challenge for a country like the Netherlands, as it is for the entire global energy community that comprises governments, businesses and many other players. There is no doubt that we will still need fossil fuels for several decades to come, but the changes and challenges are already visible. I would therefore like to praise the IEF Secretariat and host country Algeria for making 'energy transition' the theme of this ministerial meeting. We ministers are responsible for helping to ensure a safe, reliable and affordable energy system that takes account of global warming. There is no silver bullet. We will have to cooperate to achieve these goals.

In my opinion, fostering the energy transition is the main task facing the IEF member countries and the IEF's new Secretary General, Dr Sun Xiansheng. It is a task that will demand great perseverance. I wish Dr Sun – and my fellow ministers – every success with the work that lies ahead. ■



Old windmill and new wind turbine in the Netherlands