



## Editorial

Dear Friends,

Today, we are all as human beings facing some of the greatest challenges of all time: to reduce poverty whereas inequalities continuously increase while, at the same time, tackling climate change when the planet is constantly endangered.

In that context, the international community has defined the objectives, symbolized through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), that we, as a whole, have to fulfil in order to improve the life of billions.

The energy issue is probably one of the most important of those. Though it is generally accepted that energy poverty is a major barrier to development, 1.6 billion People worldwide still do not have access to electricity, whose 80% live in rural areas of the developing world. Therefore, **Access to Energy has been clearly designated as a primary human right** which allows economical and social development (MDG 1), new opportunities for education and medical treatments (MDGs 2,4,5,6), etc.

At the same time, some elements are more encouraging. First, the sustainable development issue has never been as present as nowadays in people's mind. Second, the new technological developments, especially in the energy field, provide us with new means to improve this situation. Therefore, Renewable Energies appear already for many as the **only credible, reliable and cost-competitive solution able to provide energy where conventional sources have failed to do so**. As Renewable Energies are taking the place they deserve in the developed countries, they will have to do the same within the developing world and off-grid markets.

Finally, even though the private sector has not been present for a long time within the international efforts of cooperation a double trend tends to reverse this movement. First of all, as the popularity reached by international initiatives like the Global Compact shows it, the idea that the private sector has to become an active participant to support sustainable development is now generally accepted. At the same time, the private sector is not considering the developing countries as deadlocks

anymore but as emerging economies, targets for future development of their own activities. In other words, humanity slowly starts to understand the challenging win-win combination that a more developed world represents.

The **Alliance for Rural Electrification (ARE)** has been created to facilitate this movement. ARE was founded to respond to the need of providing an access to electricity to the developing world and to facilitate the involvement of the industry in the emerging off grid markets. The Alliance represents the current changes and tries to spur these trends: renewable energies, emerging markets and responsible actions. Far from being contradictory, they need to be combined to allow the development of the most secluded areas.

The global approach of the Alliance, including each and every relevant actor active in the field of rural electrification, will open a window of new opportunity and will contribute to the development of off-grid energy markets for, redounding, ultimately, in the benefit of the whole international community.

**Take your responsibilities in this new world, Take a share in this market, become a part of the Alliance.**

**Ernesto Macias**, President of ARE



## News from the Alliance

### **New members and membership campaign**

In order to accomplish its objectives, ARE is working to increase its membership with companies coming, mainly, from the renewable energy industry sector and with an interest in rural electrification. In this perspective, ARE has launched several actions to gain new members as well as to thrive on the success of its past activities (Roundtable on Clean Energy and Development May 2006, Workshop on hybrid Systems October 2006, PV MED April 2007...).

So far, ARE has obtained encouraging results. We have raised a strong interest among large companies and gained several very credible members: SHARP, SMA, ISOFOTON, FORTIS WIND ENERGY, POWERPAL, ACCIONA SOLAR, BP SOLAR, ECOTECNIA SOLAR have already joined the Alliance.

In the future we hope many others will join this new and unique movement to promote a greater implication of renewable energy industries within the emerging rural electrification markets.

### **Communication Campaign and ARE Publications**

A strong communication policy is crucial to pass on key messages, to reach all rural electrification stakeholders and to raise awareness of the challenges of rural electrification as well as of the opportunities.

Therefore, the following complementary communication tools are being developed by the Secretariat to promote the association and to disseminate its messages, strategies and results:

**Press releases** are regularly issued to provide our partners with key information about the Alliance, rural electrification's events, projects, opportunities etc.

**A new website** carrying out a new image, structure and some additional content has been set up.

**A new ARE brochure** will be presented this month. This leaflet contains information about the association, its members and the situation of rural electrification in developing countries.

ARE has also developed a **position paper** on "*Renewable Energy Technologies for rural electrification - The role of the private sector*" where the association wants to reflect what the industry is doing for rural electrification in terms of products, services and financing, what are the challenges ahead (based on the industry experience) and what is the role of ARE vis-à-vis to this industry.

The Paper has been circulated among ARE supporters and has been fully backed up by all our members and a number of relevant industries within the field of rural electrification.

A joint position of some of the most important industry actors presenting commercially viable and field proven renewable energy technologies for rural electrification, and experience based recommendations, will constitute a powerful instrument to impulse the sector and to get the messages of ARE across to the right people.

Therefore, this statement will be widely distributed to, among others, the European Institutions, international and financial organizations, development banks, donors and different regional, national and local authorities to provide the views of the industry and the importance of assessing the challenges of rural electrification that are currently preventing the development of healthy decentralized energy.

This Position Paper will be hopefully followed by many others that will constitute a powerful instrument to bring down the existing barriers on rural electrification and to show that a window of opportunity exists within this field.

**ARE Newsletter:** Last, but not least, the secretariat has decided to create and to launch a newsletter as a tool to convey ARE messages, to gain new members and to disseminate ARE activities, as well as relevant information about and of ARE's members.

You are currently reading the first episode of this hopefully long saga which will be released on regular basis. (You can participate to this newsletter by sending us your contribution to [are\(at\)ruralelec.org](mailto:are@ruralelec.org)).

Along with the web site, these communication instruments aim to symbolize an Alliance willing to go further and to concretize all the efforts invested into ARE by its members and supporters.