

Javea Forum on Neighborhood

Renewable energies are the key to the future development of the Euromediterranean area

"We must guarantee the flow of stable and sustainable energies. We now know that energy resources are limited and that we have to think of the future". With these words, the European Commissioner for Foreign Affairs and Neighbourhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, synthesized the conclusions of the intense work sessions carried out during the "II Euro-Mediterranean Encounter: Energy supplies and regional development: a necessary debate" that was held in Jávea this weekend.



The encounter has involved the participation of representatives of the governments of Spain, Libya, Egypt and Jordan, as well as the Arab League, the European Mediterranean Institute and the Spanish Energy Club, besides the significant voices from the world of research into energies and companies and organizations from the energy sector.

"Renewable energies are primordial and constitute a part of our answer to sustainability, and as such it is a priority to work with our geographic neighbours with whom we wish to share our knowledge and our good practice". Among other aspects, The Commissioner, who chaired the institutional session, proposed to reduce the European dependence on a limited number of energy sources, in favour of "reinforcing cooperation between Mediterranean and Middle-East countries, among others; improving diversification of supply routes, and promoting an interconnected, Euro-Mediterranean energy market". Among the priorities of the actions of the European Union, regarding energy, the European Commissioner highlighted the development of an interconnected energy market, the need to explore green energy, to progress in the development of common infrastructures and to promote the diplomacy of energy.

In specific terms, the Jávea encounter has focused on "searching for ways in which to support a legislative and regulative framework in the Mediterranean area that helps to promote the development of renewable energies so that our partners benefit, and what may be done to foment research", the Commissioner said.

In turn practically all, the representatives of the southern Mediterranean countries agreed on highlighting the need to advance in technological transference, in creating knowledge and in promoting its exchange. "In the south we need the knowledge of the north, and this should not present obstacles for technological transference", declared the Libyan Minister of Energy, Ghanem Shokri. Furthermore, Shokri announced the need to develop ideas so that cooperation may become a reality: "it is necessary to create real solutions to problems such as the Middle-East and illegal immigration". In this sense, the Ambassador Hassine Bouzid, Head of the Arab League in Madrid, said "North-South cooperation covers many fields. It is necessary to form a partnership in order to develop common projects. Such as the gas duct connection that will join Algeria with Europe, which will be finished this year". "We want there to be no double standards", he affirmed. Furthermore, the representative of the Egyptian government, Ossama El Magdoub, has warned of the Russian and Chinese strategic investments in the energy market. "If we do

not cooperate between ourselves, we will have a very difficult situation. The European Union has a significant problem there".

The President of the Spanish Energy Club, Antoni Brufau, declared that "Europe has never looked towards the southern Mediterranean as a strong base of energy supply". In his intervention he proposed "energy efficiency as a way of applying renewable philosophy on a day-to-day basis". To conclude, he said that "efficient energy is a problem for everybody, but it is also an opportunity for everybody. There are many more opportunities than problems, from which we declare the need to reinforce north-south and east-west cooperation".

At the close of the session, the Autonomous Secretary for Territorial Cohesion and Relations with the State and the European Union, Rafael Ripoll declared that "for the Valencian Community, the Euro-Mediterranean zone is a space for alliances and understanding. Today we are speaking about energy, but we are also working to fight against desertification and migration flows".

Voices from technological sector businesses

The afternoon session was dedicated to listening to the views of companies in the energy sector. Representatives of the business and professional organizations agreed on signaling that "Technological development is fundamental for the growth of renewable energies, bearing in mind the role assigned to them in the energy basket in the coming years".

Among the selection of companies, professional associations and public organs related to the sector of renewable energies, representatives have participated from the Spanish Electric Network, Endesa, IM2 Solar Energy, the Valencian Energy Agency, the Valencian Association of Energy Sector Businesses, the Wind Business Association and the Institute of Energy Engineering of the Universidad Politécnica de Valencia. Among other themes, the participants have demanded greater agility in the administrative procedures for infrastructures and in the promotion of new systems. Also highlighted has been the fact that renewable energies, like wind energy, have shown that they can work significantly towards a change in the existing energy model. The Director of the Valencia Energy Association (AVEN), Antonio Cejalvo, closed this session.

The perspective of researchers

Following the words of welcome of the Secretary of the Jávea Neighbourhood Forum, Jose Luis Boronat, in the afternoon of Friday 15th May, a first session began of the II Euro-Mediterranean Encounter "Energy supplies and regional development: A necessary debate." A session which was dedicated to the technological advances in the research of renewable energies. The opening of the sessions was directed by the Ambassador for Energy Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Spanish Government, Rafael Matos, who focussed his attention on the creation process of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), which is promoted by Spain, among other countries. In his opinion, "the support of 79 countries to the statutes of the International Renewable Energy Agency, converts this organization, currently in a phase of development, into a decisive instrument for promoting a new model of energy supply with low carbon emissions, and that is efficient and respects the environment". Furthermore, the Ambassador for Energy Affairs emphasized the importance of a regulatory framework to enable the development of renewable energies. He also denounced the obstacles that hinder the

expansion of renewable energies, such as the time-consuming administrative processes for authorizations; the customs duties; the technical problems and the lack of awareness about the opportunities that these kinds of energies represent. Finally, he pointed out that the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) faces two crucial years, in which their Head Office will be chosen and a Director will be named.

Later came the intervention of representatives of two of the main research centres in Spain: the Centre of Energy, Environmental and Technological Research (CIEMAT), and the Centre for Renewable Energies (CENER), who dealt with the technological and scientific advances around these kinds of energies. In his intervention, Enrique Soria, Director of the Division of Renewable Energies of the CIEMAT, underlined that "if we wish to face the challenge of meeting the demand for energy in a sustainable environment, we cannot undervalue research into any source of energy". Enrique Soria highlighted the development experienced in wind and thermodynamic solar energies in our country in recent years. He remarked that "Spain has had a degree of technological capacity, has counted on an industry receptive to development and that the solar resources are important in our country". The CIEMAT researcher highlighted marine-wind energy as "one of the routes for the penetration of wind energy in the mix of energies in our country".

The Technical and Scientific Director of CENER, Fernando Sánchez Sudón, reviewed the technological challenges of the main sources of renewable energy. Regarding the technological challenges of wind energy, he emphasized the development and improvement of components, the optimization of fabrication processes, the problems of integration in the energy network with this source of energy and the development of storage systems. Regarding photovoltaic energy he underscored the use of alternative materials to crystalline silicon as one of the challenges for researchers.

The professor of the Philosophy of Law at the University of Valencia, Jesús Ballesteros, closed the first day of this meeting with a conference entitled "The Ethics of Sustainability". In the search for alternatives to fossil fuels, Professor Ballesteros highlighted the need to bear in mind, among other basic criteria, the rights of future generations to a healthy environment, a right which questions the resource of nuclear fission energy due to the accumulation of highly radioactive waste, as well as the rights of the present generation to basic nutrients, which questions the resources of biological fuels and justifies the promotion of renewable energies.

Furthermore, Professor Ballesteros highlighted that the advances in second-generation bio fuels hide the problems of the first generation bio fuels, additionally, these may also present problems such as the concentration of biomass and the loss of humus. He also insisted on the need to reduce energy consumption.

The "II Euro-Mediterranean Encounter: Energy supplies and regional development: A necessary debate" has congregated representatives of the governments of Spain, Libya, Egypt, Jordan, as well as members of the Arab League, the European Mediterranean Institute and the Spanish Energy Club, besides many significant voices in the world of research into energies and companies from the energy sector. The encounter ended with a cultural visit to the historic centre of Jávea.

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