

## **WORLD SOLAR SUMMIT OPENS IN HARARE, ZIMBABWE**

Harare, 16 September {No. 96-161}- UNESCO Director-General Federico Mayor today urged Africa to take the lead in the practical application of renewable energies at the opening of the World Solar Summit here.

Heads of state and government from 18 nations and delegates from more than 100 countries have gathered at this two-day meeting to adopt a Declaration on Solar Energy and Sustainable Development and to launch a 10-year campaign to implement some 300 renewable energy projects around the world.

Mr Mayor described Africa as "the ideal location for laying foundations, developing and consolidating a world solar programme." He called on Zimbabwe and the entire African continent to continue "being in the forefront of this significant venture."

The World Solar Summit culminates a three-year preparatory process initiated by UNESCO to help promote research, education, public awareness, marketing and job creation in all fields of renewable energy. The summit will also signal the start of the World Solar Programme (1996-2005) to implement an initial list of 300 high-priority projects in more than 60 countries. These include solar power schools in rural Georgia, a solar water desalination plant for the Gaza Strip to be implemented by the Palestinian Authority, along with energy self-sufficient homes, farms and villages in Pakistan, Yugoslavia, the Russian Federation and other countries.

The World Solar Programme 1996-2005 will be carried out through existing ministries and institutions financed by private and public sources. Major partners include the European Commission, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the International Energy Agency, the International Solar Energy Society, the UN Development Programme, the World Health Organization and the World Meteorological Organization.

"The close involvement and participation of the economic operators including that of the private sector should be encouraged in promoting the development and utilisation of solar energy in a sustained manner," said Dr Salim Ahmad Salim, secretary-general of the Organisation of African Unity, at this morning's opening session.

The summit, the first of its kind held on solar and renewable energy, is hosted by President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe. A World Solar Commission, established by UNESCO, includes 16 heads of state and government. On Saturday, this commission endorsed the draft Declaration on Solar Energy and Sustainable Development and the draft World Solar Programme 1996-2005.

"The scale of the World Solar Commission's activities can be compared to the global effort to utilise nuclear energy for peaceful purposes - and its positive impact on the socio-economic outlook of developing countries could be significant," said President Eduard Schevardnadze of Georgia, in a message read to the participants.

President Mugabe criticized the inequitable sharing of renewable energy technologies. "No serious attempt has been made to harness and bring the benefits of this resource to the disposal of the vast majority of rural people who cannot afford conventional energy," he said. The major donor agencies allocate only three percent of their energy development assistance to renewable energy.

In Botswana, coal and wood account for about 75 percent of fuel consumption, said President Ketumile Masire. "Only late in the industrialisation process did we realise that questions of environmental sustainability must be built into economic planning," he added.

President Frederick Chiluba of Zambia pointed out that only 18 percent of Zambian households have electricity this year, despite more than a doubling of this rate since 1991. "It is clear that the slow pace of conventional electrification will remain a major constraint to development," he said. "But we believe the answer to this problem lies in cheaper, cleaner, renewable resources like solar energy, so abundant in our continent."

Mr Mayor identified education, training and improving public participation as significant mechanisms for popularizing renewable energy technologies, many of which are on display to the public at the Harare International Convention Centre, site of the summit.

The Director-General also repeatedly underscored the human impact of renewable energy, particularly with regard to education, peace and ameliorating economic and social disparities. A "globally sustainable energy system" will be a key to "reducing the present asymmetries in the sharing of resources of all kinds: asymmetries that are inadmissible from the moral point of view, that are the roots of frustration and violence and that are threatening world peace and security at the dawn of a new millennium," he said.

The following heads of state and government participated in the summit: Antonio Mascarenhas Monteiro of Cape Verde, Kamisese Mara of Fiji, Joachim A. Chissano of Mozambique, Sam Nujoma of Namibia, Ibrahim Mainassara Bare of Niger, Sardar Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari of Pakistan, Benjamin William Mkapa of Tanzania, Prime Ministers Van Dunem of Angola, Daniel Kablan Duncan of Cote d'Ivoire, Mahathir bin Mohamad of Malaysia, Habib Thiam of Senegal, Barnabas Sibusiso Dlamini of Swaziland; and President Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority.

Representatives of the following inter-governmental organizations also participated: the European Commission, International Atomic Energy Agency, UN Development Programme, UN Environment Programme, Universal Postal Union, World Health Organization.