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Meru to host Africa's first Sh15b hybrid power plant



Meru County is set to host Africa's first hybrid renewable energy plant following the signing of a Sh15 billion deal.

The Kenyan Investment Authority (KenInvest) and the Meru County Government inked the pact for the project with global renewable energy developers Windlab and Eurus Energy at the just ended 7th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 7) in Yokohama, Japan.

Dubbed the Meru County Energy Park, the large-scale facility combines wind, solar PV and battery storage project with construction expected to start in 2021.

The facility will provide up to 80 megawatts (MW) of clean, sustainable renewable energy, consisting of up to 20 wind turbines and more than 40,000 solar panels.

It is expected to power over 200,000 households. The facility is a public-private partnership, and the Meru County Government, through the Meru County Investment and Development Corporation (MCIDC) will own part of the project once it is operational.

The memorandum of understanding between KenInvest, the Meru County Government and the investors also include capacity building and knowledge transfer efforts.

The MCIDC shareholding of the project is expected to earn the county revenue and also benefit the local community.

Windlab is an Australian-based energy company that boasts developing the world's first utility-scale hybrid renewable energy project, Kennedy Energy Park in Australia, while Eurus Energy is a Japanese firm.

Hasten benefits

"We are excited to bring world-leading innovation in the renewable energy sector and project development expertise to Meru County, Kenya," said Windlab's Global Chief Executive Roger Price.

His Eurus Energy counterpart Hideyuki Inazumi also hailed the historic venture.

"Previous TICAD events have resulted in a number of highly successful Japanese-African ventures and we intend to use this opportunity to strengthen our



commitment to working with Windlab on world-leading renewable energy projects across East Africa,” said Inazumi.

“The flagship Meru County Energy Project will be one of our first projects in the region.”

MCIDC Acting Managing Director Samwel Odhiambo said the partnership would hasten benefits of the projects to residents.

“Signing the MoU here in Japan is a major milestone for the project. We are looking forward to hosting Africa’s first hybrid renewable energy facility in our county,” said Eng Odhiambo.

KenInvest Managing Director Dr Moses Ikiara said the project would help shore up manufacturing in the country.

“As Kenya moves to implement the medium-term Big Four agenda, promotion of predictable and sustainable renewable energy is key to guarantee successful realization of the manufacturing pillar,” said Ikiara.

Also present at the signing of the MOU was Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Kenya’s Foreign Affairs Cabinet Secretary Monica Juma.

The Government has already set up a \$47 million (Sh 4.7 billion) kitty in partnership with the World Bank to fast-track the uptake of viable solar and clean cooking solutions.

Source: Standard Newspaper.

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