



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

PRESS RELEASE

Rarotonga, Cook Islands, 26 April 2014

Solar photovoltaic power plant for Cook Islands Outer Islands

The European Commissioner for Development, Andris Piebalgs, signed a contribution agreement with the Asian Development Bank's Regional Director (ADB) for its South Pacific Sub-regional Office, Mr Robert Jauncey in Rarotonga today.

The agreement is for the construction of a solar photovoltaic power plant in Mangaia, Mauke and Mitiaro. The power plant will allow Cook Islanders improved access to sustainable energy services through an increased use of renewable energy sources.

During the signing ceremony, Commissioner Piebalgs commended the "joint effort of the Cook Islands Government, the European Union and the Asian Development Bank" in designing the project and stressed the importance of close coordination with other complementary activities funded by New Zealand. This, Commissioner Piebalgs said, increases effectiveness and avoids overlap.

The European Union's overall contribution to the project is €5.3 million (NZD 8.5m), out of a total budget of €9.4 million (NZD 15.1m). This will be secured through expected co-financing from the ADB and the Government of Cook Islands.

The actual kick-off of the project is expected after formal approval by the Asian Development Bank's Board of Directors.

Background

The main objectives of the project are:

- To build a solar photovoltaic power plant with a total installation capacity of 0.9 MW peak, coupled with advanced secondary energy storage installation;
- To rehabilitate the energy distribution grid in Mangaia, Mauke and Mitiaro.

For more information

In March 2013, at the Pacific Energy Summit co-hosted by New Zealand and the European Union in Auckland, Commissioner Piebalgs pledged a €25 million (NZD 40.2m) contribution to new energy sustainability projects in the Pacific region.

During the Summit, the European Union and the Asian Development Bank signed a Joint Declaration on Reinforced Dialogue on Sustainable Energy Investments in the Pacific

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Region, aimed at fostering their cooperation in the implementation of actions in the energy sector in the region.

The co-hosting of the Pacific Energy Summit also marked the beginning of a close partnership between the European Union and New Zealand, aimed at improving access to sustainable energy services in the Pacific.

The European Union's contribution to the solar photovoltaic project in the Cook Islands follows from the above commitments, to closely coordinate with development partners to improve access to renewable energy for the citizens of Cook Islands. (ENDS)