



P R E S S R E L E A S E

1 September, 2014
Apia, Samoa

Embargoed until 1500 hours

Pacific's Largest Solar Photovoltaic Site Opened in Samoa

The largest solar photovoltaic site in the Pacific was opened at the Faleata Racecourse in Samoa today. The site was opened by the New Zealand Foreign Minister, Murray McCully and the Prime Minister of Samoa, the Hon. Tuilaepa Lupesoliai Dr Sailele Malielegaoi. The opening took place on the margins of the UN World Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS), currently underway in Apia.

The solar array at the Faleata Racecourse site consists of over 8,000 panels which will offset the use of diesel fuel through the production of up to 2.2MWp. It will be the largest source of renewable energy generation in the Pacific and is estimated to save the Government of Samoa around WST\$10.5m (EUR 3.4m) on an annual basis.

The system is a result of the Pacific Energy Summit where the European Union committed €25.5 million (WST 76.33 million) to renewable energy. Since 2000, the European Union has devoted substantial resources of just over €100 million (WST 299.3 million) to the adoption of renewable energy technologies and to promoting energy efficiency in the Pacific.

Speaking at the opening of the solar farm, European Commissioner for Development, Andris Piebalgs said: "Reducing reliance on fossil fuels is a critical prerequisite for sustainable growth for SIDS. This is a conviction which the European Union shares with New Zealand. I commend Samoa and New Zealand for their ambition to produce the largest PV site in the Pacific and to do so in less than 18 months.

"The EU/NZ Energy Access Partnership, of which this solar photovoltaic farm is an immediate result, is a key feature of the EU development cooperation in the energy sector in the Pacific, which – about 1 year since its launch- showcases several success stories already. Earlier this year, I inaugurated a solar PV plant in Tuvalu, where we also work with NZ under the Partnership and this second and much bigger inauguration here in Samoa shows the momentum and impact the Partnership has on the ground."

The EU energy cooperation in the Pacific also includes success stories in many other countries outside the EU/NZ Energy Access Partnership in line with the Sustainable Energy for All initiative, such as Nauru, Niue, Tonga, the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau and the Republic of the Marshall Islands. The EU-financed North-REP project which covers the latter three countries for instance, has given since 2009 access to electricity for the first time to more than 12,000 people, which represents about 7% of the combined populations of these countries. (ENDS)

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"The European Union is made up of 28 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, during a period of enlargement of 50 years, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders".