



AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP

**Remarks by President Akinwumi A. Adesina at the opening of the “Off-Grid Revolution” stakeholder consultation workshop at the African Development Bank, March 28, 2017.**

Honorable Minister, Thierry Tanoh, Minister of Energy, Côte d'Ivoire,  
Honorable Minister, Henry Macauley, Minister of Energy, Sierra Leone,  
Board of Directors of the Bank,  
Staff Colleagues,  
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning!

- Let me first welcome you all to Abidjan and to the African Development Bank. I am delighted to see a huge number of experts come join us in our resolve to realize the “off-grid revolution” in Africa.
- We all know that the electricity deficit in Africa is immense. Today, over 645 million Africans do not have access to electricity. Of the over 240,000 mobile telephone towers in Africa, set to grow to 325,000 by 2020, more than 95% of tower sites in off-grid regions, run on inefficient traditional diesel generators, driving up cost of doing business. Introducing cleaner off-grid solutions will provide business opportunities to YOU.
- Regular supply of power, which is taken for granted in developed countries, is a luxury in Africa – in the 21st century.
- Some 137 years after Thomas Edison developed the light bulb, Africa is still in the dark. Africans are tired of staying in the dark, and no development can occur without power.
- Yet, Africa’s energy potential is enormous, in particular with almost unlimited solar resources (10 TW). Africa must move quickly to unlock the energy potential that the continent is endowed with.
- The environment is also more favorable than ever before – the cost of solar photovoltaic modules has fallen precipitously in recent years, which is enabling the supply of cheaper electricity to off-grid households. Mobile technologies are advancing at an enormous speed. Now mobile-

based energy service platforms are available in more and more communities.

- This is why at the African Development Bank, we launched the New Deal on Energy for Africa last year. Through the New Deal, we have committed to invest \$12 billion on energy in the next five years and leverage \$45-50 billion from the private sector and other partners. Our goal, working with all stakeholders, is to connect 130 million people via grid systems, connect 75 million people via off-grid and provide some 175 million to have access to clean cooking energy. Indeed, light up and power Africa is the first of the High 5 priorities of the Bank.
- We should employ a mix of approaches – on-grid, mini-grid and off-grid – to light up and power Africa. Still, off-grid solutions must be at the core of our approach to achieve the ambitious electricity access targets. It is simple: people cannot wait until the grid power reaches every corner of their villages or cities. We must be wise, efficient, and quick in our actions.
- Few days ago I launched the Africa Progress Panel report “Lights, Power, Action: Electrifying Africa” with the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan here in Abidjan. And the report says, "Africa has the potential to be at the forefront of this off-grid electricity transformation". I fully agree.
- In fact, the “off-grid revolution” in Africa has already started, and it started because of YOU. You are leading the innovation and actions on the ground, even in most difficult places to operate in and in underserved and neglected areas.
- Today, the Africa Development Bank wants to learn from your experience and expertise, and we want to deliberate with you on how the Bank can best facilitate a full-scale revolution.

- While the off-grid sector is growing fast, driven by innovative business models and rapidly decreasing technology costs, the sector faces challenges linked to 1) the absence of an enabling environment, 2) the difficulties to obtain financing, 3) the high perceived risk of the sector and 4) the viability of business models using new technology.
- We need new ideas, in terms of technology, business models, financing and de-risking, to jump these hurdles. And we should put the ideas into a thorough test, and scale them up throughout the continent. At the same time, we need a stronger political will to enable and accelerate the “off-grid revolution”.
- We must move faster. Just imagine an Africa with lights everywhere. An electrified Africa will be an unstoppable Africa.
- We have set ambitious but achievable targets. **Our guest visiting from Bangladesh today will share their experience. I really appreciate him, like many of you here, for making a long journey to Abidjan. Bangladesh connected 660,000 people per year via off-grid systems. Just to put our ambition into the context – we need to achieve 11 times what Bangladesh did in order to deliver the 75 million off-grid connections.**
- The African Development Bank, your Bank, is firmly committed to make this happen with its fully established Vice Presidency for power, energy, climate and green growth.
- Last year we did \$1.7 billion in operations that supported power across 19 countries. And last December, the Bank launched the US\$ 500 million Facility for Energy Inclusion (FEI) with the approval of a \$100 million seed financing package. We expect to do more this year, investing about \$2 billion for power and leveraging another \$5-7 billion.

- And we are ready to work even more closely with partners, both public and private, and raise our level of investments in the energy sector and pioneer innovations.
- African countries will drive much needed policy and regulatory reforms to remove barriers to the off-grid expansion and private sector capital investments. You can count on the African Development Bank as your strategic partner. We will do more, faster, at scale – together!
- I imagine we sit down together again in a few years to celebrate the “off-grid revolution” – not the launch, but its real success and achievement. Let us rise up and act together, to light up and power Africa! Thank you.

Dr. Akinwumi A. Adesina  
President, African Development Bank