

## TECHNOLOGY

### US-Israel sign agreement of cooperation in renewable energy

By Rachel Neiman February 22, 2009

A new US-Israel agreement of cooperation in renewable energy was announced at the opening of the 2nd Eilat-Eilat International Renewable Energy Conference last week. The US-Israel Energy Cooperation Act is an international collaboration aimed at creating a renewable energy storage initiative to reduce the world's oil dependence.

The Cooperation Act will fund eligible joint ventures between US and Israeli businesses. Two million dollars, or \$1 million from each country, has already been allocated for this year with a significant increase expected in future years.

At the opening, Jonathan Shrier, acting assistant secretary at the Office of Policy and International Affairs of the US Department of Energy, told the conference plenum that the agreement had the support of Dr. Steven Chu, the new US Secretary of Energy. "The secretary sees the power of international arrangements," such as those brokered by the Binational US-Israel R&D Foundation (BIRD), the US-Israel Binational Science Foundation and others. "These various parties are involved because we need to push R&D of already available technologies and not neglect the cutting edge research at the basic science level."

Shrier told ISRAEL21c that, while the US has similar agreements with countries such as Japan and the EU, "This one is special because we have a partner who brings a lot to the table. Israel is world-renowned in the field and we meet as equals," he said.

#### US-Israel already in cooperation

Examples of US-Israel cooperation in renewable energy are already underway, noted Shrier. Seambiotic and Better Place, have already received approval. Seambiotic is the first company in the world utilizing flue gas from coal burning power stations for algae cultivation. The company aims to grow and process marine microalgae using an ecologically based environmental system to reduce air pollution and global warming. Better Place is a venture-backed company aiming to reduce global dependency on oil through the creation of an electric car network with a swappable battery.

The US Department of Energy and Israel's Ministry of National Infrastructures agreed that the exchange researchers and conferences are two important elements of the collaboration. Two conferences in the US and two in Israel will take place annually. The annual conference in Sde Boker, Israel, will focus on the technological advancements in the Renewable Energy industry while the annual Eilat-Eilat conference will serve as a platform for industry-ready technologies to exhibit and market their offerings. In addition, Israeli researchers will spend significant time working in the US market and Israeli researchers will do the same in Israel.

The three-day conference focused on the latest innovations in renewable energy, with the participation of internationally-recognized alternative energy companies such as SCHOTT Solar of Germany, SunPower of the UK and Concentrix of the US, and speakers from around the world, as well as leading Israeli firms and start-up companies in the field. Close to 1,000 people attended the event and exhibition at Eilat's Herod's Palace conference center.

At the opening, keynote speaker, Israel's Minister of National Infrastructure Binyamin "Fouad" Ben Eliezer, said his office was concentrating on two areas, that of assuring energy sources, primarily natural gas; and developing alternative energy sources, "primarily solar, given Israel's optimal climate conditions," and others, such as oil shale, as well.

#### The Silicon Valley of renewable energy

By 2020, 10 to 20 percent of Israel's energy production will be solar, Ben-Eliezer told delegates, adding that he had full confidence that the energy economy division would be 20% solar, 40% natural gas and 40% coal-based. Energy would be generated at solar power projects at Ashalim, a 250MW BOT project whose tender will be offered shortly; Timna, a 250MW project whose bid for tender will be announced this coming summer; and Tel Arad, which is in the planning stages.

Ben-Eliezer called for the government to implement the decision to declare the Negev and Arava national priority regions. Also in attendance were MKs Avishay Braverman and Ophir Pines-Paz and Minister of Environmental Protection Gideon Ezra.

Noam Ilan, director of business development for the Eilat Eilat region said: "We truly believe that this event will place us firmly on the international map as a true world leader in the renewable energy and solar industries and the participation of Ministers Ben Eliezer and Ezra underscores that belief."

His sentiments were echoed by Meir Yitzhak-HaLevy, Mayor of Eilat, who said he intended to make Eilat, "the world's first solar city," and Udi Gat, chairman of the Hevel Eilat Regional Council, who said: "We want to be the Silicon Valley of renewable energy."

Other announcements made at the conference include the Timna Renewable Energy Park, which will be a center for R&D, and the AORA Solar Thermal Module at Kibbutz Samar, the world's first commercial hybrid solar gas-turbine power plant that is already nearing completion. Solel Solar Systems announced it was beginning construction of a 50 MW solar field in Lebrija, Spain, and Brightsource Energy made a pre-conference announcement that it had inked the world's largest solar deal to date with Southern California Edison (SCE).