

PRESS RELEASE

Berlin, June 18, 2009

Reply by the DESERTEC Foundation to the Press Release from EUROSOLAR / Hermann Scheer

Internationally cross-linked and decentralized renewable sources of energy should not be played off against each other. As a contribution to climate protection and affordable energy prices the potential of both sources must (and will) be used. They complement each other perfectly for solar thermal power plants, with their thermal storage facilities, can deliver power on command; at night as well as in the day. Another consideration is the enormous increase in the demand for energy outside of Europe. In MENA, for example, in India and in China to power their Industries, their air-conditioning and the desalinization of sea water. By means of clean power from deserts this could be accomplished in an environmentally friendly way.

Therefore we are no longer dependent on inefficient energy storage devices for decentralized facilities—and this makes decentralized generation of energy financially even more attractive. While power from deserts lowers the production costs of energy, the decreasing cost of decentralized photovoltaic helps to demonstrate to the big energy suppliers their boundaries in terms of pricing.

A key objective of DESERTEC is the quick establishment of a low-loss high-potential continuous-current carrier net (HVDC), a “Supergrid”, which is independent of any one energy utility. Consequently there won't be only one circuit and only one big solar-thermal power plant but, as shown in our map, a rather decentralized network with enough spare capacity in case of a breakdown of either circuits or power plants. HVDC-circuits can be laid below ground with only a relatively small additional cost. There are no significant problems with electromagnetic radiation and in contrast to alternating current (overhead HVAC), there is unlikely to be resistance from local people.

If southern European countries establish transmission grids to supply electricity from deserts and if electrical energy is transported via the Mediterranean approximately five years later, this would have an immediate benefit for climate-protection efforts in Germany. It would mean that German energy exports to southern Europe could cease so that old nuclear reactors and coal-fired power plants in Germany can be quickly shut down.

A current press release from E.ON already proclaims investments in solar thermal power plants in South Europe and North Africa while preparing to hand over the grids.

What is the alternative to solar energy imports?

It is doubtful, whether it would be useful for industries in Germany to be energy self-sufficient if that means enormous extra costs. And even if Germany were to reach this goal in a reasonable time, there would still be a problem for the rest of the world. Other European countries sense in the idea of clean power from deserts that there could be a beneficial contribution to their energy mix, and that this would boost their efforts to stabilise the climate. Since CSP in desert regions can deliver power on demand, any alternative would have to do the same. If Germany were to rely heavily on PV, then it would be necessary to make greater use of domestic gas and “clean” coal, even when the disposable native hydropower, geothermal energy and biomass potentials are as far as possible simultaneously used, like we suggested.

Hans Josef Fell, one of the fathers of the German renewable energy bill (EEG), is of the opinion that imports of solar power from deserts would be no threat for this exemplary law. There would simply be a second law established, which controls the allowance of the feed-in of power from deserts.

One remark about the risk of damage from sandstorms: After 20 years of operational experience in the Mojave desert, the assumption that parabolic mirrors would be contaminated or destroyed by the deserts’ sand can not be confirmed. Here the original mirrors, which get by with regular dust removal, are still installed. Otherwise there are enough further suitable locations, for example in rocky deserts, where sand storms are no threat.

About DESERTEC

The DESERTEC Concept was developed by the Trans-Mediterranean Renewable Energy Cooperation (TREC) and a worldwide network of scientist, politicians, and entrepreneurs associated with the Club of Rome. Founders of the DESERTEC Foundation include the German association of the Club of Rome and members of the TREC network from four continents.

The DESERTEC Foundation serves as an ambassador and sponsor for the DESERTEC Concept. The purpose of the concept is to insure the livelihood of mankind based on a lasting, developing, and peace supporting form of power production. The DESERTEC Foundation brings together political, economic, civil, and social interests thereby forming a powerful political influence.

The DESERTEC Foundation advertises by public relations the DESERTEC Concept to obtain as many supporters as possible. It also performs as a policy consultation at the national and supranational level in Europe. It also promotes MENA regions worldwide by implementing the DESERTEC Concept with legislators and influential social circles.

You can find more information at www.desertec.org.

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