Masdar completes Pacific islands solar power projects

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Abu Dhabi is deploying two major solar projects that will provide electricity to more than 1,600 homes on two Pacific islands, as part of a broader commitment to deliver a significant portion of the archipelago's urgent renewable energy needs.

Masdar, the renewable energy arm of the Abu Dhabi government's strategic investment company, Mubadala Development, said it finished the two plants this week on the islands of Tuvalu and Kiribati, with each plant having the capacity to generate up to 500 kilowatts of electricity.

Two years ago Abu Dhabi made a commitment to fund the new energy projects in response to an urgent plea the previous year to improve access to renewable energy sources, identified as a major obstacle to development by the Pacific islands' leaders at a summit hosted by the International Renewable Energy Agency in Abu Dhabi in 2012.

The Pacific island nations have also been identified by the United Nations as among the most under threat from the effects of climate change and requiring immediate remedial action.

In response, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed, the UAE's Minister of Foreign Affairs, set up the US$50 million UAE-Pacific Partnership Fund in spring 2013 with the aim of deploying a total of 6.1 megawatts of renewable energy on the islands, with the further aim of showcasing Abu Dhabi's abilities in the area of new energy.

To date, Masdar says it has deployed five projects with capacity to generate 2.6MW of renewable energy on the islands, with the further aim of showcasing Abu Dhabi's abilities in the area of new energy.

The two newly completed plants comprise a 500kW solar photovoltaic (PV) power plant on Tuvalu's atoll of Funafuti, with a similar-sized PV and water protection plant on the Tarawa atoll of the Republic of Kiribati.

"These two projects not only demonstrate the UAE and Masdar's commitment to helping Pacific island nations deploy sustainable renewable energy solutions, which play a vital role in driving forward the social and economic development for the people of Tuvalu and Kiribati," said the Masdar chief executive Ahmad Belhoul. "But clearly, and equally important, they also highlight the ongoing work we are doing to combat climate change through our renewable energy projects."

Masdar estimates that the two plants will also save 206,000 litres of diesel each year – saving the islands of US$545,000 annually, which can be spent on other badly needed development projects, as well as a reduction in CO2 emissions of 1,200 tonnes each year.

Enele Sosene Sopoaga, the prime minister of Tuvalu, said the new solar project would contribute 40 per cent of his country's peak electricity demand, according to a statement released by Masdar.

SOURCE: THE NATIONAL/PACNEWS
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