



A new International Energy Charter open to Africa

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World-wide signatories of the 2015 International Energy Charter include an increasing number of countries and regions from the African continent. Why a new International Energy Charter, and why is it relevant for Africa? The goal is to streamline and empower countries to participate in the global energy architecture. The specific added value of the International Energy Charter is to enhance the rule of law at a global level in order to mobilise energy investment that is necessary to tackle global challenges, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the UNFCCC Paris Agreement on climate change.

Universal principles typically emerge in a certain period of time, in a given geographical area and under unique circumstances. At which point, those principles spread across the world due to their inherent value. This is the story of the Energy Charter Process, which started as a Eurasian initiative following the fall of the Berlin Wall and as an opportunity for long-term and stable cooperation in energy between the East and the West. The 1991 European Energy Charter, an initial political declaration, led to the 1994 Energy Charter Treaty, a legally binding agreement which is still in force and acts as a legal basis to settle conflicts and ensure secure, sustainable, competitive and affordable energy.

The energy sector is experiencing a huge transformation. While the energy sector gets restructured, boundaries broaden and challenges become global, the need for common principles to secure investment and trade remains unchanged. Those principles are to be defined, owned and implemented by the largest possible number of countries. This is the essence of the 2015 International Energy Charter, which has so far more than 80 signatories from all continents, enabling countries and regional organisations to reinforce their political will to create an investment climate favourable to mobilise private investors towards the achievement of climate change mitigation according to the Paris Agreement, the universal energy access as set out in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the African Union Agenda 2063.

The 2015 International Energy Charter has no legal nor financial implications. Instead, it is an international benchmark for the purpose of mobilising private investment towards a sustainable energy future underpinned by the rule of law. So far it has been signed by thirteen African countries: Benin, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Chad, Kenya, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Swaziland, Tanzania and Uganda. Other countries having expressed their intention to join are Mali and Mozambique. Four regional organisations are also signatories: the East African Community, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Economic Community of Western African States and the G5 Sahel. The 2015 International Energy Charter is technology-neutral in the sense that it does not favour one energy source over another in order to respect national sovereignty. It brings together developed and developing countries, energy producing, consuming and transit countries as well as countries facing the challenge of universal energy access.

By taking part and signing the 2015 International Energy Charter, African countries and regional organisations are not only invited to benefit from international experiences and lessons learned on creating market-oriented reforms in the energy sector, but they are also encouraged to play an active role in designing the global energy architecture in terms of open markets, cross-border trade, energy security, clean energy, investment promotion and investment protection. The importance of Africa in global development, stability and peace cannot be underestimated, and therefore the African continent must be present in global platforms addressing global challenges. From the end of the Cold War to a steady warming planet, from East to West and North to South relations, the International Energy Charter is a benchmark for a global, secure, sustainable and open energy sector, open to Africa.

The European Union is signatory of both the 1994 Energy Charter Treaty and the 2015 International Energy Charter. Furthermore, with the support of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Development and Cooperation through the EU Technical Assistance Facility for the Sustainable Energy for All Initiative, the Energy Charter Secretariat could implement a capacity building program based on the secondment of civil servants from African countries to the Secretariat in Brussels. This is part of a broader strategy aiming to engage countries with further energy policy reform in line with international standards. Therefore the secondment develops in parallel with policy dialogue in the capital in order to allow national authorities to play an active role in an intergovernmental platform promoting energy investment and cross-border trade with full respect for national sovereignty.