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WFES08

20 Jan 2008

Deserts and algae could power cars in future, says WFES expert

Abu Dhabi, January 2, 2008 – Electricity from solar power stations located in desert areas and biofuels produced from algae could play key roles in reducing the climate impact of cars, ships, trains and planes. So says Professor Dr. Nasir El Bassam, an expert in clean transportation who will be speaking later this month at the inaugural World Future Energy Summit in Abu Dhabi.

The World Future Energy Summit (WFES 2008), following on the heels of last month's climate change talks in Bali, will provide a forum for exchange and discussion on the technologies and strategies needed to meet the ever-more-urgent objective of mitigating the climate impacts of transportation.

In an interview, Professor El Bassam – Director of the International Research Centre for Renewable Energy (IFEED) – said that recent studies* published by the German government had concluded that solar power generated in just 1-2% of the world's desert areas could eventually provide all the electricity the world needed. This would include the electricity required for clean – zero-carbon – transportation as improvements in electric vehicle technology encourage people to switch from gasoline and diesel.

With the number of vehicles in the world projected to rise from 700 million today to over 2 billion by 2050, efforts are intensifying to find ways to meet this fast-growing demand while at the same time minimising the sector's greenhouse gas emissions. Specifically, said Professor El Bassam, the Bali climate change talks suggested that carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions should be reduced by half by 2050.

The World Future Energy Summit 2008 will be held under the patronage of HH General Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces and will be hosted by Masdar, Abu Dhabi's multi-billion dollar, multi-faceted response to the need for a global focus on alternative energy and sustainability.

"Masdar City, the world's only zero-carbon, zero-waste city, will also be car free," said Khaled Awad, Director of Masdar's Property Development Unit. "Personal Rapid Transport vehicles, powered using renewable energy, will move residents and visitors around the city with frequent convenient stops. Clean transportation is a key element in Masdar's broader vision for a truly sustainable city and is one of several industry sectors invited to inhabit the city. One day, all cities will be built like this." Visitors to WFES can see several models of Masdar City at Masdar's stand and throughout the conference center.

The summit will also provide delegates and visitors with opportunities to see for themselves some of the latest transportation innovations. These will include the world's fastest electric car, the Eliica (Electric Lithium-Ion Car) from Japan, and the winner of the Hydrogen category in the 2007 Shell Eco-marathon, a vehicle called Polyjoule.

The futuristic-looking Eliica (see attached photo) is a prototype electric car with breath-taking performance. It is capable of accelerating from a standstill to 100 km/h in 4.1 seconds, can reach 160 km/h in 7.0 seconds, and has a top speed of 370 km/h. Designed by a team at Keio University in Tokyo, the Eliica will be a highlight of the Japanese Pavilion at the WFES 2008 exhibition. The pavilion will also feature other advanced technologies being developed in Japan.

In the 2007 Shell Eco-marathon Polyjoule demonstrated an astonishingly

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meagre fuel consumption of 2,797 kilometres/litre. Polyjoule was developed by engineering students at France's Lycée La Joliverie, using a fuel cell developed by students at the Ecole Polytechnique of Nantes, also in France.

At the WFES 2008 conference, Professor El Bassam will chair a session on Clean Transportation that will include contributions from Lotus Cars, GM Corporation and Shell Aviation.

Representing Lotus Cars will be Simon Wood, Director of Engineering. Lotus is currently working on "technologies for down-sized, low-CO2 engines to deliver greatly reduced emissions while maintaining an engaging driving experience".

Asked what messages he had for policy-makers, Professor El Bassam said: "We should be honest with ourselves and others that business-as-usual is no longer possible. Policies therefore need to be put in place to encourage manufacturers and scientists to develop technology. Governments need to adhere to the recommendations of the IPCC [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change] and others, and speak to their own experts, to develop and implement the necessary strategies."

* The studies – commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, and conducted by the German Aerospace Center – are available from <http://www.dlr.de>

Also, see www.ifeed.org - International Research Centre for Renewable Energy (IFEED)

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