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Establishment of a Sustainable Buildings Network

In the context of the Heiligendamm Dialogue Process (HDP), a number of informal workshops were organized in 2008 and early 2009 with experts, networks and organizations to help develop the concept of a Sustainable Buildings Network (SBN). Based on these workshops a concept for the SBN was drawn up and presented for the Heiligendamm Dialogue Partners. This concept was discussed on different meetings in late 2008 and the first half of 2009 and a final proposal for a SBN was presented at the L'Aquila Summit in July this year.

Consensus was reached in the preparation process on the value added of creating an SBN as a "network of networks" in light of the untapped potential for energy efficiency savings in buildings. The main purpose of a new SBN would be to share information, identify and disseminate best practices and discuss policy instruments on sustainable buildings in order to provide major stakeholders, in particular policy makers, with evidence-based advice and practical guidance. The SBN could become an international reference portal for information on energy efficient buildings and renewable energy in buildings, combining a strong political mandate, technical expertise and networking with advanced and innovative dissemination strategies.

The SBN should focus on policies and measures to implement existing technical solutions and to release the energy efficiency potential of both new and existing buildings.

SBN to be established in IPEEC

At the L'Aquila Summit in July this year, leaders endorsed the HDP concluding report including its chapter on energy and the creation of the SBN as an important outcome of the HDP. It was subsequently agreed to integrate it as a sub task of the International Partnership on Energy Efficiency Cooperation (IPEEC), emerging from the Toyako Summit in 2008, in order to ensure synergies and to lean on the committee structures of this initiative. At the first Executive Committee meeting of the IPEEC in September 2009, the IPEEC welcomed the SBN as a task of the IPEEC.

In practical terms this means that the IPEEC members (including the G8, China, India, Mexico, Brazil, Korea and the European Commission) will provide the political guidance and commitment for the SBN, and that the IEA will provide the technical support for this work. The SBN is expected to be finally established at the IPEEC meeting in late January 2010 and to be kicked off by an event under the Canadian G8 presidency. Both the IEA and the HDP secretariat are currently providing support for this development.

The IEA will host a SBN Secretariat, which can start once agreed on the terms (ToR) and the collaboration (MoU) between the establishing countries and the IEA, provided there are sufficient

pledges for funding for the coming 1-2 years. The SBN Secretariat will be the main coordinator of communication for SBN and for its activities. The Secretariat will be supported by voluntary contributions of all SBN Members. It will report to, and receive guidance from the SBN Steering Committee. The SBN Members will establish the SBN Steering Committee, to govern the overall framework and policies of the SBN. The Steering Committee should meet at least twice a year,

As part of the process networks will be encouraged to join the SBN. An SBN homepage is planned to be put in place during the coming months in order to provide additional information on the network. More details on activities will follow soon.

As part of the sustainable buildings network some working groups or subtasks will be set up giving possibility for networks and actors to work together on specific topics. These working groups will be established in collaboration between the networks and the representatives from the SBN countries at policy making level.

Examples on working groups could be:

Zero energy buildings

Many initiatives takes place in the field of zero energy buildings and zero carbon buildings or even plus energy buildings. This includes national initiatives, regional initiatives or research, development and deployment projects, but also legislation initiatives start to target zero energy or zero carbon. Harmonization of definition and methods as share of experience could be key elements.

Ultra low refurbishment

Some examples show renovation projects on 75 – 90 % reduction of the energy consumption in existing buildings or even a few cases of zero energy refurbishment. These need specific solutions, a holistic approach, special finance and training aspects. Collection of experience from different climates and regions and dissemination is important.

Intelligent architecture for tropic regions

Examples on intelligent architecture for tropic and for very hot climates could include low cost design options, national or local traditions for energy efficient architecture, transfer of knowledge from south to south (developing countries), control of humidity or ventilation with simple solutions.

Heating and cooling for ultra low

Development of smart heating and cooling options for buildings with ultra low energy consumptions. Such systems could often be combined with renewable energy sources. Work is going on in IEA implementing agreements, national and regional as well as in private organizations or companies.

Setting up the SBN

In the beginning of 2010 some workshops will be set up in order to establish the collaboration within the SBN. The first workshop will take place 22 January 2010 in Paris. This workshop will be used to set up the terms for cooperation between the networks. After the workshop and the subsequent approval of the SBN at the IPEEC meeting in late January, an Advisory Board for the SBN will be established. The workshop will also be used to discuss possible working groups that could be organized in the frame of the SBN.

Following on that, workshops to make proposals and prepare working groups under the SBN will be organized, finally rounded up by a kick-off conference for the official launch of the SBN. It will confirm the commitment of the HDP partner countries to the SBN and mark the start of the activities of the network.

Next steps:

- Networks interested in joining the SBN or in gaining more information can contact us on SBNcontact@IEA.org
- Experts from networks who wants to join the workshop on 22 January 2010 can register on SBNcontact@IEA.org
- More information on the establishment of the SBN will follow soon to all experts on this list and networks registered will follow soon.