

# ISA assembly to elect president and co-president: DG Upendra Tripathy



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- Third assembly of the first treaty-based international government rganization headquar tered in India starts on Wednesday
- Feasibility report for World Solar bank prepared by ISA Secretariat and **Brickwork Analytics** to be presented in the virtual assembly

**New Delhi:** Upendra Tripathy, a former secretary in India's ministry of new and renewable energy, has been heading the International Solar Alliance (ISA) since its inception. In an email interview to Mint, a day before the third assembly of the first treaty-based international government organization headquartered in India, Tripathy spoke about the impending election of the president and co-president of the ISA assembly; and European, Nordic and West Asian countries expected to become members of ISA, that was launched at the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris in November 2015.

Tripathy, a former Indian Administrative Service officer from the Karnataka cadre, has been closely involved in solar power development in the country and said that the ISA Secretariat in coordination with **Brickwork Analytics has prepared the feasibility study report for setting up a World Solar bank, that will be presented in the virtual assembly.** He also elaborated upon the plans for the One Sun One World One Grid, which seeks to transfer solar power generated in one region to feed the electricity demands of others. Edited excerpts.

## ISA is holding its third assembly starting Wednesday. What is on the agenda?

ISA is holding its third assembly virtually from 14th--16th October 2020. The third assembly session is scheduled on 14th October 2020 followed by three regional ministerial sessions (Africa region; Asia and Pacific region; Latin America and Caribbean region) on 15th October 2020, and three technical sessions viz. Coalition for Sustainable Climate Action: ISA's Corporate Platform, Session on One Sun One World One Grid; ISA INVEST and Host Country Awards Day on 16th October 2020.

As per the ISA' framework agreement, the ministerial plenary session of the third assembly assesses the programmes, projects and activities undertaken by ISA Secretariat in this calendar year (2020) and approves the work programme and budget for the calendar years 2021 and 2022. The election of the president and co-president of the ISA assembly and selection of the new vice-presidents of the ISA Assembly are also part of agenda for the third assembly.

Some of the major action agenda points of the third assembly are the respective launches of; the seventh programme of ISA focused on solar cooling and heating; phase 1 of roadmap for mobilization of \$1 trillion by 2030, Ease of doing solar report for ISA member countries and the feasibility report for setting up of World Solar Bank.

## What is the status of the World Solar Bank?

To further strengthen ISA and facilitate affordable financing to ISA member countries, the Honourable minister for power and renewable energy and the president of the ISA assembly took a meeting of Secretaries to Government of India on 24th June 2020. It was decided that ISA Secretariat shall be preparing the feasibility report for setting up of World Solar Bank.

ISA Secretariat in coordination with **Brickwork Analytics prepared the feasibility study report for setting up World Solar bank.** The feasibility report covers the following key areas-- rationale for setting up the World Solar Bank; demand estimate and sources of fund for the World Solar Bank for the next 10 years; projected financials, target rating and its proposed governance structure. The feasibility study report along with proposal for setting up World Solar Bank as per ISA framework agreement shall be submitted for the consideration and guidance of the third ISA assembly.

## Which are the new countries expected to join ISA?

In a landmark move, the ISA decided on the universalization of its membership by extending it to include all members of the United Nations and making ISA a truly global organization. The notification on universalization of ISA membership was issued by the depositary, Ministry of External Affairs on 31 July 2020. ISA membership is now open for all 193 UN members and as on date 70 countries have deposited the ratification of ISA framework agreement and additional 18 countries have signed ISA Framework Agreement.

So far only three countries from Europe are ratified member countries of ISA. With ISA membership open for all UN members, we expect more countries from Europe such as Germany and Nordic countries to be members of ISA. Recently Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Sultanate of Oman from West Asia have ratified ISA framework agreement and going forward we expect more West Asian countries to be ISA members.

## What has been the traction on the ambitious cross-border power grid plan?

India's Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi, at the first assembly of the ISA in October 2018, called for connecting solar energy supply across borders, with the vision of 'One Sun One World One Grid' (OSOWOG). The concept behind the OSOWOG is that 'The Sun Never Sets' and is a constant at some geographical location, globally, at any given point of time. The initiative will help to realize "three transitions" of energy development. The transition of energy production from fossil fuel to clean energy dominance. The transition of energy allocation from local balance to cross-border and global distribution. And the transition from coal, oil, and gas in energy consumption to electric-centric consumption.

A first milestone took place at the First World Solar Technology Summit, on 8 September 2020, with the signing of a tripartite MoU between the ISA, the Government of India, and the World Bank to implement the OSOWOG initiative. The ISA will act as the nodal agency for all activities including implementation of the OSOWOG study for developing a long-term vision, implementation plan, road map and institutional framework for implementing the initiative. The MNRE will approve the selection of the consultant to make the first Detailed Project Report required for examination of feasibility and implementation of the global OSOWOG project. Sustainable Partnership for Rooftop Solar Acceleration in Bharat (SUPRABHA), a technical assistance programme of the World Bank through SBI, will fund the program.

Bids have already been invited for selection of consultants for preparation of long-term vision and implementation plan for OSOWOG project and the roadmap for implementing the vision shall be ready by next year.

## You have helped build this organization from the initial days. How has the experience been?

I have been Director General of ISA Secretariat since March 2018. It has been an amazing experience to be part of ISA's journey that has grown leaps and bound in terms of membership, corporate partners, partner organizations etc. In the last 2.5 years. ISA Secretariat aggregated and discovered prices for world's largest solar pumping system tender in 2019. ISA Secretariat also conducted mission visits to 9 member countries in 2019 and has conducted virtual sessions with more than 30 member countries to prepare solar roadmaps and update member countries on ISA programmes, projects and activities.

In last 2.5 years ISA membership has increased to 70 countries as on date. ISA has 14 global corporate partners today and many more global organizations are expected to partner with ISA as part of ISA's Coalition for Sustainable Climate Action' (ISA-CSCA). Further 48 strategic partnerships have been signed with many allied international organisations including IRENA. ISA Secretariat has prepared Theory of Change (ToC) that has highlighted how ISA intends to facilitate the achievements of SGD 7 and 13 by focusing on above three key energy issues viz. energy access, energy security and energy transition.

Going forward, ISA shall continue working closely with all stakeholders viz. member countries, financial institutions, government authorities, corporate organizations, foundations, research institutes, training associations in accelerating solar deployment in member countries and achieving its objectives of reducing cost of technology, cost of finance and mobilizing more than \$1000 billion solar investments.