

WWEA is striving for 100% renewable energy option - Stefan Gsänger

Exclusive Interview of Secretary General, World Wind Energy Association

EU: Please tell us about yourself, your qualification, experience and association with WWEA and RE Sector?

Stefan Gsänger: I am a political scientist by education and grew up at a time when we became aware that many environmental problems were about to become existential threats to the future of mankind. Air pollution, dying forests and the first talks about climate change as well as the Chernobyl disaster made clear that neither fossil nor nuclear energy are appropriate solutions for our future. When I started to look into the potentials of renewable energy, I began to understand that a shift towards renewables would solve many of these problems. And I was lucky enough that after finishing university I had the opportunity to work for one of the leaders of the renewable energy movement, Dr. Hermann Scheer, German MP and winner of the Alternative Nobel Prize. Through that work, I got also closely connected to the wind sector and helped to create the World Wind Energy Association in the year 2001.

EU: What is most important in your association; core values or vision?

SG: The original motivation why to found WWEA was that pioneers and experts from around the world, in particular outside Europe and North America, didn't have a platform to meet, to exchange information and to represent their common interests to the outside. Most of the wind markets at that time were in a very early stage, and the wind "industry" in these parts of the world was not well organised and didn't have a proper representation. Equally, in particular those often community based pioneers in Europe saw themselves under pressure from the "traditional" energy sector and wanted to strengthen their position by creating a global alliance that would jointly work for the global shift towards renewable energy, in a more participatory and democratic manner. This explains the core values, basic principles and goals of WWEA: Being an inclusive organisation that gives a voice to the wind community from all parts of the world, with a special focus on the participation of smaller investors and communities, and striving for a goal which at the initial phase sounded utopic for many: a worldwide full renewable energy supply.

EU: Since you are wearing two important hats of big associations like GO100RE and WWEA, what strategies you follow globally and what are the major achievements of your associations till date?

SG: The structure of WWEA ensures that the international wind community is represented within our association on a democratic basis, e.g. by giving special attention to wind energy associations. Accordingly, two important pillars of our work are the focus on community power and other domestic, usually small and medium sized enterprises as well as the global 100% renewable energy goal. I dare to say that we have been able to come to substantial achievements by bringing our goals

■ By Halima Khan



onto the global agenda. Regarding concrete achievements let me just give you a few examples: We had a substantial impact on creating the Chinese wind industry as our WWEC2004 in Beijing kick-started the Chinese renewable energy legislation and industry. WWEA was one of the initiators of the International Renewable Energy Agency IRENA at a time when there was almost no support for creating such urgently needed agency – which plays today an important role in disseminating renewables. Bringing the topic of 100% renewables on the global agenda, we have managed that this topic is today discussed as a realistic option in the general public – certainly one precondition for the Paris Climate Accord. In this context, naturally the Global 100% Renewable Energy Platform played a crucial role after we had founded it as a very broad alliance of international civil society organisations. Of course we have worked closely also with governments on national renewable energy legislation, including in Pakistan, and have had an impact also on increasing national ambitions and improve implementation. ■