

# The right renewables? Location, location, location!

## Title

The BirdLife World Congress, that brought together nearly 600 conservationists from 120 countries held an important workshop, entitled ***The right renewables? ? wind power, bioenergy and biodiversity***. Renewable energy sources are critical in the transition from fossil fuels towards climate-friendly, low carbon societies. However, there is concern that some technologies, such as most biofuels, large-scale hydro-power, as well as poorly-sited wind farms, and associated transmission lines, can have serious negative impact on nature.

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The workshop featured high profile speakers, including Henry Paulson Jr. (Paulson Institute and former US Secretary of the Treasury), Patricia Bliss-Guest (Climate Investment Funds), Stephen Rumsey (Permian Global Research Ltd, UK), Hanneline Smit-Robinson (BirdLife South Africa), and chaired by Khaled Irani (BirdLife's Chairman).

The panelists explored strategies and experiences in working with renewable energy developments and provided insight into robust and strategic impact assessment, safeguards, policy development and the importance of environmental recovery in addressing climate change. Henry Paulson Jnr, The Paulson Institute, opened the session saying that "Our dependence on hydrocarbons is to me by far the greatest threat to the planet- and climate is the biggest threat -, damaging air, water, human health and wildlife". He went on to stress that "intact ecosystems are a hugely important defence against the impacts of climate, and on top of that the intact ecosystems are what makes life worth living as far as I am concerned. To mainstream renewables at scale, planning how the infrastructure is configured and sited and the technologies that are used becomes very important, as is the need for public funds to leverage private sector financing for renewables." Patricia Bliss-Guest, Program Manager, Climate Investment Funds (CIF) Administrative Unit stressed "I personally have an ambition for CIF-finance wind projects to become the gold standard for how wind farms can be compatible with conservation. We believe that by starting to foster conversations among countries, multi-lateral development banks, project development, conservation experts and NGOs we can raise awareness and understanding of the risk, sensitise partners to solutions

and foster important south-south exchanges. Our partnership with BirdLife International is critical to this dialogue and we are committed to continuing to work with BirdLife to disseminate lessons and emerging practices among our network of CIF partners. We look forward to our continued collaboration with BirdLife to do our part as we seek solutions to scaling up green renewable energy. BirdLife International believes that renewable energy development sensitive to biodiversity conservation is possible, but must be based on rigorous science, sound strategic planning and best practice and policy to ensure that conservation needs are met and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are effectively reduced. A good example of BirdLife's work with renewables is the **Migratory Soaring Birds Project** being carried out in the Middle East and Africa. Khaled Irani concluded "Large scale and rapid roll-out of renewable energies, without unacceptable ecological harm is possible, but requires significant efforts, commitment and collaboration from all players in the field and significant changes to current policy and practice." BirdLife welcomes continued collaboration with key stakeholders to make this possible.