

Asia building zero emissions generation but coal still king

Gwen Andrews of Alstom presents on the energy markets in Asia and implications of a price on carbon

Wellington (1 August 2011)

Globally, over the next 5 years, nearly 50% of the new-build electricity generation will be non CO2 emitting. However, coal remains an essential energy commodity and will be the source of more than half the stationary energy produced over that same period.

Gwen Andrews, Vice President Power & Environment Policies, Asia & Oceania at Alstom Power, presented an overview of the Asian energy market to the 7th Australia New Zealand Climate Change & Business Conference.

In her talk, she outlined initiatives in various Asian countries that are driving increasing development of non-CO2 emitting power sources. These include investment incentives for wind and solar, feed-in tariffs and policies to invest in nuclear energy. In India, as an example, 440million people have no access to a grid. Promoting off-grid renewable energy production helps the Indian government meet this energy demand.

The policies, Ms Andrews said, are being driven not necessarily by international negotiations around climate change, but rather as a means to achieve an industrial and competitive advantage. "Asian countries, including Japan, Korea and China, are well aware of the competitive advantage of an energy efficient economy and are positioning to capture export markets in clean technology," says Ms Andrews.

However, coal remains a cheap and available energy source in most Asian countries and, as such, will remain a primary energy source. With the anticipated growth of energy demand in Asia, this will mean significant emissions from coal power generation.

For this reason, carbon capture and storage is a critical technology. "If we don't do something about the coal based emissions in Asia, it doesn't matter what we do in developed countries. We will be swamped," concluded Ms Andrews.

Ms Andrews was speaking at the Climate Change & Business Conference which continues in Wellington today and tomorrow. The event hosts more than 300 delegates with approximately 70 business and policy experts presenting on implications of climate change and best practice response.

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