

Havana solar thermal energy

HAVANA, Feb 28 2022 (IPS) - Cuba has readjusted its plans to achieve at least 37 percent of electricity from clean energy by 2030, a promising but risky challenge for a nation that is a heavy consumer of fossil fuels and has persistent financial problems.

This is a first step towards a much more ambitious goal: an energy mix made up of 100 percent domestic sources, in order to achieve sovereignty.

Approved in 2014, the Policy for the Prospective Development of Renewable Energy Sources (RES) and their Efficient Use projected that solar, wind, biomass and hydroelectric power would account for 24 percent of electricity generation by 2030.

Currently, 95 percent of the electricity produced in this Caribbean island nation comes from burning fossil fuels, including natural gas.

Based on government indications and research by the Electric Union and Cuban universities, "it was determined that we can reach 37 percent (by 2030) with RES," said Rosell Guerra, director of Renewable Energies at the Ministry of Energy and Mines, in an interview with IPS.

The official pointed out that since it is an island nation, "Cuba is not interconnected with any major power system," which means that as the use of RES gradually expands, "it is important to ensure the stability of the electric system and the quality of the service, voltage and frequency, as well as the storage of electric power for the night time."

This archipelago consumes just over eight million tons of fuel annually, of which 4.4 million tons are used for electricity.

Nearly 40 percent of the fuel must be imported, mainly fuel oil and diesel, which have higher prices on the international market.

The country spends some 2.8 billion dollars annually on the electricity sector, including the purchase of fuel, the operation and maintenance of aging thermoelectric plants and the purchase of energy from independent producers.

"We have no alternative, the country cannot continue to pay such large energy bills, which together with food purchases (estimated at some two billion dollars annually), are our largest," Guerra stressed.

Cuba's carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions decreased in the last five years, to 22.9 million tons in 2020,



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according to international data, but energy generating activities are still the main domestic sources of polluting gases.

Achieving 37 percent generation with sustainable energies “will mean the emission of nine million fewer tons of carbon dioxide per year,” added the official.

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