Africa launches massive renewable energy initiative

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Solar panel on the roof of a house. Credit: Shutterstock / Twonix Studio / WWF

African heads of state today announced plans for a gigantic renewable energy initiative that would provide as much as 300 gigawatts of renewable energy – twice the continent's total current electricity supply – by 2030.

The African Renewable Energy Initiative (AREI), announced at the start of the two-week United Nations climate negotiations in Paris, aims to achieve 10 gigawatts of new renewables by 2020 and mobilize the potential to generate 300 gigawatts by 2030. The initiative is driven by African countries and represents a part of their contribution to the global efforts on climate change and eliminating energy poverty.

The AREI initiative will help African nations embrace low-carbon development strategies while creating jobs, improving energy security and bringing clean, safe and affordable energy to the 640 million Africans who currently lack access to it.

This plan was met with an announcement by France that it will provide 2 billion euros for renewable energy in Africa between 2016 and 2020.

Asrat Yirgu, WWF Africa's Climate Change Coordinator, said: "This initiative can transform Africa's energy systems, grow African economies and help improve energy access. African countries have abundant renewable energy resources – now these will power our future."

Samantha Smith, Leader of WWF's Global Climate and Energy Initiative, said: "African countries are driving this initiative and other countries are supporting it with finance and technology. This is exactly the kind of collaborative, large-scale action we need if we hope to forge a path to a safer climate future. It is also the latest example that shows we can have both zero carbon and zero poverty."

Provided by WWF