

## NAWAL AL HOSANY

Permanent Representative of the UAE to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)

**Marc-Antoine Eyl-Mazzega, Director of the Center for Energy & Climate of Ifri**

I am very pleased that we have the representative of the United Arab Emirates to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), which is headquartered here in Abu Dhabi. Excellency, you are the representative of your country to that major organization, Dr. Nawal Al Hosany. Perhaps you could tell us, to start with, about the fundamentally important COP that took place a year ago in Dubai, where expectations were huge, and I think the results were tremendous in many aspects. One of the commitments at the COP was to multiply by three the deployment of renewable energy sources. Perhaps you could tell us, any of you, especially as you follow and as you participate in the governance of this important organization that aims to foster global renewable deployment worldwide – and it has a global membership, unlike the IEA – how you see the perspectives, what needs to be done, and what makes you optimistic in the end and where we all need to do a bit more of work. The floor is yours.

**Nawal Al Hosany, Permanent Representative of the UAE to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)**

Thank you very much. First, thank you for having me here. It is such an honor to be among such esteemed speakers and to participate in a very important conversation. The topic, as we just mentioned, is extremely critical at the time we are living in. I also am very proud to be contributing to the diversity aspect of this conference. I heard I am only the third female speaker today, so I feel extremely embarrassed on behalf of everyone here, but I am proud of that. Thank you.

I am a member of a very important community, which, as you mentioned, hosted COP28 here a year ago. However, we are also the host of IRENA and being a host of IRENA imposes a huge responsibility on us, along with optimism, because if we, as a world, agree to create such an organization, then we understand the importance of diversification of our energy sources. IRENA, even before COP28, in their World Energy Transition Outlook, outlined the importance of renewables in the race towards maintaining our path in line with 1.5 degrees, and that was extremely important and became one of the reasons we announced the very ambitious target to triple renewables and double efficiency by 2030. That target, as you mentioned, made its way as Article 28 in the UAE Consensus.

What does IRENA do, and what do we need to do as member states to make this happen? IRENA through its report was assigned to track the progress of where we are, not only by COP28, but also by the G20. 133 countries signed that pledge to triple renewables and double

energy efficiency, and IRENA is now monitoring this progress. The first report was launched pre-COP29 a few months ago. Of course, we know that we are not on the right track to achieve that because, according to IRENA's numbers, in 2023 – you mentioned why I am optimistic – we added 473 gigawatts of renewables, so the current total capacity is 3,865 gigawatts. However, by 2030, in order to align with our 1.5, we need 11,174 gigawatts. Therefore, the gap is quite high. We should add 1,044 gigawatts per year for us to achieve this target.

Though we are very far from where we need to be, we are definitely moving in the right direction. Maybe a little bit slower than we should, but I guess, once we know, and once we see the numbers, I am optimistic that we are going to correct that, because, to your point, the fastest growing sector is renewables. Technology is advancing, costs are dropping, and we are seeing more and more solutions for that. Regarding your question about what IRENA does to keep us all on the right track, in the tracking report, there are five pillars that we all need to ensure we pay enough attention for us to achieve the targets.

Of course, and it goes without saying, the most important one is finance. We need to finance the energy transition, and we need to scale up and expand this distribution of finance. The supply chain, skills, and capacity are extremely important, because we need a skilled workforce to achieve the energy transition. In terms of infrastructure and system operation, some will require modernization, some will require expansion, and others will require smart operation. This is where IRENA and platforms like this play an important role. The fourth pillar is international cooperation. Not one country can do this alone, and that is why the tripling target is not country-specific; it is a global target, and we need to globally work towards achieving that. One of the most important pillars, which I think this platform can contribute to successfully, or in an important way, is that of policy and regulation.

As a host country, but also as a member state, we keep supporting IRENA to make progress and support countries in these three pillars. We provide support with finance through some of our platforms that we launched with IRENA, such as the Energy Transition Accelerator Finance platform, ITAF. We also funded IRENA to help 20 developing countries develop their NDCs, and many other initiatives that we do. NDCs are very important because NDC3, which some of you may be aware of, is due by 2025, and that is going to help us check where we are and help us in tracking our global stock take.

### **Marc-Antoine Eyl-Mazzega**

Many thanks for this information. When I listen to you, I think it is very important to underline that you have also identified the fact that we need the entire value chain, and actually it is a battle for the entire electricity system that has a lot of components in there. Of course, you need access to finance, but you need the grids, so you need the power, electronics, etc., and of course the skills and the man force, and that is lacking in many countries. Therefore, clearly these bottlenecks need to be addressed. Can I ask you what the exact situation is in your country? You have, of course, growing energy demand, especially electricity demand, not least, of course, for air conditioning and water desalination. You have strong economic growth with manufacturing expansion. How are renewables being developed in your country? Are you confident that you will be able to ramp up fast?

**Nawal Al Hosany**

I think the one thing that we have, and many times we miss it, is incredibly visionary leadership. Our journey in renewables started when it was not even fashionable. When people were not even looking at renewables, we created Masdar Initiative back in 2006. Today, we have three of the largest and lowest-cost solar plants in the world. Our journey with renewables started much earlier when we used to call them, as Frank remembers very well, bleeding-edge, not even cutting-edge, technologies. However, most of those have now materialized and have even become commercially viable and very competitive.

We are extremely confident that we are on the right track to achieve our own tripling targets. In 2022, our installed capacity was 3.1 gigawatts, mainly solar, clearly, but by 2024 we have already doubled this to six gigawatts, and by 2030 our aim is to achieve 14.2 gigawatts. Therefore, our overall clean energy target is for almost 20 gigawatts, including 5.6 gigawatts of nuclear power in which we are already investing. Looking into all our stakeholders, everybody is aligned towards that target, and we have very strong companies. I think you just mentioned as you were coming in that we have TAQA, ADNOC and Masdar. They are all collaborating together in different ventures to accelerate the process of advancing renewables, but also new technologies such as hydrogen production for both national and international markets. At 18 years old, Masdar is now active in 40 countries. They have installations on six continents and their combined capacity is 31.5 gigawatts worldwide.

When it comes to renewables, to be honest, I am not very concerned. The only thing that maybe we are a little bit concerned about, and not only, I guess, here, but globally, is energy efficiency, because it seems to be somewhat neglected. Nobody really looks at it in a systematic way. This is why we, at the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure, announced that we are going to create an alliance, which is Global Energy Efficiency Alliance, to drive, in collaboration, hopefully, with IRENA and other partners, efforts in energy efficiency through knowledge sharing, capacity building, but also establishing the right network to facilitate this work.

**Marc-Antoine Eyl-Mazzega**

Dr. Al Hosany, thank you also, indeed, for reminding us that it is not all supply-side driven.

**Nawal Al Hosany**

Demand is very important, yes.

**Marc-Antoine Eyl-Mazzega**

Energy policy has to be balanced, and in many countries in the world the demand-side aspect is neglected for various reasons, but it plays a critical role. Thank you so much. Yes, that deserves applause.