

COP22 host Morocco's mosques are going green

Two months before it hosts the COP22 climate conference, Morocco is preparing to launch an ambitious project to turn its mosques green as a commitment to clean energy.



Wafa Mosque, Larache, Morocco. By Dans, CC BY-SA 3.0 – [Wikimedia Commons](#)

The Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs announced a tender in mid-August to modify 64 mosques initially in six of the kingdom's cities to reduce the energy they consume.

Its goal is a 40% reduction in energy costs at 15,000 mosques around the country that consume an average of 90KW a day, said the SIE state energy investment company.

Studies have shown that energy consumption can be cut by 60%, with estimates showing savings of as much as 68% at Rabat's majestic As-Sunna mosque. This can be achieved through energy-saving lighting, photovoltaic electricity generation and solar water heating, and without harming the appearance of the mosques.

The upgrades will also benefit the faithful, with access to hot water for washing and air conditioning available in prayer rooms, said SIE.

Another upshot would be the "strong social impact" through the creation of 5,000 jobs and a new growth market, it said.

"The return of the investment made will be based on the energy savings achieved."

German development organisation GIZ, which supports the project, describes it as a "win-win" situation that will also raise awareness of renewable and efficient energy in Morocco.

"It is based on the idea that Moroccan companies... involved in these mosques will be repaid through savings made by the building manager," says GIZ's Jan-Christoph Kuntze.

All of the technology needed is "already available on the local market", he said, adding that this gave the project the potential to create jobs.

"The mosques can play a multiplier role" of raising awareness about the need to save energy and adapt to cleaner sources.

King Mohammed VI has pushed a proactive policy of environmental awareness in the northwest African country of nearly 34-million people, 99% of whom are Muslim. Marrakesh will host the next world climate conference, COP22, from November 7 to 18.

One of the main challenges for Morocco, which hosted COP7 in 2001, is to ratify the Paris Agreement signed last year by 195 countries to fight global warming. COP22 will "highlight the country's commitment to work for the implementation of the Paris Agreement and to continue to support developing countries... affected by the impact of climate change", Mohammed said in a speech in June.

The king was behind an ambitious plan launched in 2009 to develop renewables and enable the country bereft of hydrocarbons to support nearly half of its energy needs this way. The ultimate aim is to raise the share of renewable energy to 52% of all consumption.

Central to this was the opening of Noor I - the first stage of what will be the largest solar power plant in the world - near Ouarzazate on the edge of the Sahara desert. As Morocco counts down to COP22, its people are being exposed more and more to events and initiatives showcasing the country's involvement in protecting the planet.

Its "green mosques" project is expected to take centre stage in the drive for change being highlighted at the conference.

Source: AFP

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