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International Issues

Vietnam Turns to Emissions, Solar Data to Chart Climate Roadmap



By Lien Hoang

July 19 — Vietnam's promises under the Paris Agreement on climate change are getting a dose of data as the country sets out to crunch the numbers on its use of both greenhouse gases and solar energy.

Vietnam this summer is starting a yearlong data collection process to fill two directories that will guide its strategy to reduce carbon emissions.

One of the directories, the so-called Solar Hub, will include figures on solar power already in place, overall solar radiation that could be captured, and the costs to invest in this technology, according to Huynh Dinh Hiep, senior analyst for investment group Dragon Capital's clean fund.

Hiep, whose company co-sponsored the hub, said he hopes it will convince companies that photovoltaic panels are more than just an "expensive marketing tool" or "magical dust" to cut expenses.

"We want to change that perception by providing accurate information and the potential benefits that solar PV can bring to their businesses," Hiep told Bloomberg BNA July 13.

The other directory will quantify greenhouse gases, as recommended by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Both databases are bankrolled by the U.K. government's nascent Prosperity Fund program.

Susceptible to Climate Change

Vietnam, one of the countries most susceptible to the effects of climate change, went to Paris last year with an emissions reduction pledge that projected that without changes, its greenhouse gas emissions in 2020 would be twice what they were just 10 years earlier. But it promised to work to cut that 2020 level by 8 percent.

The Southeast Asian country of 92 million also pledged to improve how it inventories greenhouse gas. Vietnam said it is ranked fourth worldwide for number of carbon reduction or offset projects, despite being responsible for just 0.5 percent of the planet's greenhouse gas emissions in 2010.

Ricardo Energy & Environment, a consultancy leading the greenhouse gas data project, said in a Web post that it will help Vietnam develop a plan to "meet its international environmental commitments and become a leader in emissions monitoring amongst developing nations." The company will hold workshops as part of its ongoing work to "up-skill key technical staff" in Vietnam who can gather and analyze data.

National Power Plan

Vietnam has a national power plan that seeks to generate 4.5 percent of energy through renewable sources by 2020, compared with 3.5 percent in 2010.

But companies complain Vietnam doesn't pay enough for electricity to justify investments in renewables and should discard some regulatory hurdles, such as licensing.

Solar Hub is meant to attract investors by providing information, such as the cost of panels and inverters, as well as the timeline of construction.

"I am confident that the Solar Hub project will demonstrate real impact on the uptake of solar power in Vietnam and will help make the case for investment in renewable energy sources more generally," Andrew Holt, Prosperity Fund head at the British Embassy in Hanoi, said in a statement.

Snapshot

- Vietnam collects data for two directories to guide its strategy to fight climate change
- One directory is meant to help convince companies to invest in solar technology and equipment
- A second directory will map out a plan to help Vietnam cut emissions

He didn't give a price tag for the solar database but said it is among the first beneficiaries of the 1.3 billion pound (\$1.7 billion) Prosperity Fund, of which 1.1 million pounds was designated for Vietnam.

The database will focus on southern Vietnam, especially the economic engine Ho Chi Minh City, which the Asian Development Bank counts among the 10 global cities most threatened by climate change.

Its cousin database for greenhouse gases, on the other hand, is a national project under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment.

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