

Gabriel welcomes business initiative on solar thermal power plants

Federal Environment Minister Sigmar Gabriel has welcomed the business initiative for the construction of solar thermal power plants in desert regions. Gabriel said, "Renewable energy sources in Africa and the Middle Eastern countries represent an immense potential which can be tapped by means of solar thermal power plants. The construction of such power plants, together with an electricity alliance in the Mediterranean region, also lies in European interest. At the moment the solar thermal power plants and the electricity alliance are still a vision. The implementation of this plan is highly ambitious and requires considerable financial efforts."

Solar thermal power plants are primarily intended for use in countries in the Earth's sun belt as they are dependent on direct sunlight. There are not enough of these in Germany. Yet, in sunny countries, the various technologies for concentrating solar power are on the increase.

In recent years the Federal Ministry for the Environment investigated, in three studies, the prospects of renewable energy sources in North Africa. The findings were clear – using solar energy alone, it would be possible to produce enough electricity in North Africa to cover the countries' own needs as well as export considerable amounts. Solar thermal power plants in particular have immense potential here. This was also highlighted by the federal government in the Solar Plan in the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean.

Minister Gabriel emphasised that the course must be set to establish an electricity alliance on a European level, i.e. within the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean. This applies to the technical as well as the legal framework conditions with regard to the transmission of the electricity. Minister Gabriel said, "It is for this reason that we are driving the development and the implementation of the Solar Plan in the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean forwards." At the meeting of the 16 major industrialised and emerging nations at the end of May in Paris, Germany proposed strengthening the technological development and continuing the global expansion of solar thermal power plants.