

SASEC – the Southern African Solar Energy Conference

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The Department of Science and Technology (DST), through the National Research Foundation (NRF), has tasked the Centre for Renewable and Sustainable Energy Studies (CRSES), Stellenbosch University, to build human resource capacity; deepen and discover knowledge; and stimulate innovation and enterprise in the field of renewable and sustainable energy. To this end, and through the academic network of CRSES, the need was identified to establish a dedicated bi-annual conference that focuses on solar energy research and development in the region. CRSES then hosted the first Southern African Solar Energy Conference (SASEC), which was held from the 21st to the 23rd of May 2012 at the Protea Hotel in Technopark outside Stellenbosch. SASEC focuses on both Solar Thermal Energy and Solar Photovoltaic technology systems and applications. SASEC 2012 provided the opportunity for researchers, engineers, technologists, enterprises, and individuals to share and discuss research and development outputs in the field over the five-year period leading to the Conference.

Over fifty papers were reviewed and accepted for presentation at SASEC 2012. The Conference drew one hundred and thirty-four delegates from nine countries. The Premier of the Western Cape Province, Ms Helen Zille, opened the Conference and the programme made provision for a combined plenary session in the morning splitting into parallel sessions in the afternoon, one focussing on solar thermal and the other on photovoltaic systems. There were two keynote speakers: Dr Christoph Richter, the Executive Secretary of SolarPACES and Project Manager of Solar Research at the Plataforma Solar de Almeria in Spain for the Institute of Solar Research of the DLR (the German Aerospace Centre); and Prof Jürgen Werner, the Director of the Institute for Photovoltaics at Stuttgart University in Germany.

After SASEC 2012, the accepted papers were further scrutinised and rated – low, medium, high – in terms of: the original reviewers' scores of the

papers for the conference proceedings; whether the papers are strongly research-based; whether the papers are understandable to a broader audience; and whether the papers speak to the wider Southern African region. The Technical Review Committee also attempted to strike a balance between solar thermal energy and solar photovoltaic technology systems, and between papers being more technical or policy/planning oriented. The outcome of the overall rating process is the six papers published in the February 2013 edition of the *Journal of Energy in Southern Africa* that include:

- A concentrating solar power value proposition for South Africa.
- Efficiency and costs of different concentrating solar power plant configurations for sites in Gauteng and the Northern Cape, South Africa.
- Potential and future of concentrating solar power in Namibia.
- Evaluation of feed-in tariff-schemes in African Countries.
- Optical design of low concentrator photovoltaic modules.
- Thermal modelling of low concentrator photovoltaic systems.

The Chair and the Technical Review Committee of SASEC 2012 believe these papers, as well as the other papers in the conference proceedings, make valuable contributions to develop the solar energy sector in Southern Africa; thereby contributing to further economic development in the region.

The Centre for Energy Research (CER) at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth, will host the second SASEC, which is scheduled for the end of January 2014 in Port Elizabeth. Further information can be obtained from the Chair of SASEC 2014, Prof. Ernest van Dyk.

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Chair - SASEC 2014

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