

# SA's energy resources key for economic growth

South Africa, with its vast renewable energy resources such as solar power, has the potential to become one of the world's fastest growing economic hubs, according to Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe.



(Image: GCIS)

Delivering the keynote address at the South African Youth Council-organized South African Green Energy Youth Summit on Monday, Motlanthe said South Africa's future energy plans provided for a significant departure from the goal paradigm. However, this did not mean that South Africa would abandon coal as a source of energy.

"On the contrary, we intend to develop our renewable energy resources not only to diversify our energy mix, without preferring one energy carrier over another, but also to take full advantage of our endowment in other natural resources," Motlanthe said.

Besides coal, South Africa had one of the best solar energy resources in the world. It also possesses abundant shale gas resources, the commercial exploitation of which still had to be investigated and pursued, and uranium deposits, the size of which were too big to continue to be ignored.

"If this is coupled with the potential for regional interconnection within the SADC sub-region, we have the potential to be one of the fastest growing economic hubs in the world, on the back of our environmentally balanced and sustainable energy resources," Motlanthe said.

## Potential benefits from 'going green'

Potential economic benefits from pursuing the green energy route include the continuation of searching for clean coal technologies and solar technology, which could open up regional development in the Northern Cape, and the pursuit of a knowledge economy through the beneficiation of uranium and the nuclear programme.

In addition, there was also a possibility of an interconnection of the hydropower potential on the Southern African Development Community, particularly in Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the stepping up of the exploration for shale gas in the Karoo, and harnessing natural gas discoveries in Tanzania and Mozambique.

While the macroeconomic spin-offs were evident, Motlanthe said, there were also socio-economic benefits such as skills development, rural development and an improvement in the quality of life.

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These diverse options being considered to ensure South Africa's energy security could cause the republic's economic development objectives to be achieved and sustained well into the future.

Success in this mammoth task would depend on assistance from the youth, academia and research institutions, Motlanthe said.

He remarked that while South Africa could justifiably be proud of being one of Africa's thriving economies, it was lagging behind in key aspects. This included capacity-building in niche industries.

"Stemming from this reality is the imperative for us to continue pursuing a developmental state which is rich with cutting-edge technologies and innovation alike, while we concentrate on strategic spaces such as niche industries."

He challenged the summit to deal with the challenge of South Africa's low levels of enterprise and skills development in response to opportunities presented by the green economy.

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