

SMA inverter factory to boost SA solar power industry

Cape Town, 12th December, 2014 – SMA Solar Technology, the global market leader in solar inverters, formally opened a manufacturing facility for its innovative inverter technology in Cape Town, South Africa today. The investment will boost the capacity of the solar power industry to help address the country's growing energy crisis, create jobs, transfer skills and technology as well as support the REIPP projects with local content requirements.

Speaking at the launch, Mr. Mzwandile Masina, South Africa's Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry said: "In advancing radical socio-economic transformation, the government is committed to creating an enabling environment that will facilitate investment, job creation and growth and will continue to improve support measures that can help us achieve this."

Premier of the Western Cape, Mrs. Helen Zille, spoke of a 'crowding in' of Green Investments to the Western Cape against the back drop of a shifting energy market in South Africa, climate change and sustainable development goals. "By unlocking the potential for decentralised, renewable energy, the Western Cape and South Africa may be able to de-couple its economic growth from non-renewable energy consumption in order to grow its economy. It is becoming clear that renewable energy is providing a cheaper, cleaner and more sustainable alternative to conventional coal power. We welcome market leaders, like SMA to our Province to strengthen our efforts to migrate our power base to a low carbon, sustainable trajectory."

Provincial Minister of Economic Opportunities, Mr. Alan Winde, said: "The Western Cape Green Economy Strategic Framework highlights the comparative advantage for Green and Socially Responsible Investors in the renewable energy industry." Renewable energy sources are set to comprise 42% of South Africa's new build electricity by 2030. "Aside from innovative programmes underway with the University of Cape Town and University of Stellenbosch, CPUT is set to open The South African Renewable Energy Technology Centre early next year. This will provide training opportunities for operation and maintenance technicians in wind and solar technology. We welcome collaborations between SMA's Solar Academy and our local educational institutions to share global standards, innovation programmes, trends and research", the Provincial Minister added.

Thorsten Ronge, Managing Director of SMA Solar Technology South Africa said

that as world market leader with a well-known brand within the solar sector, SMA will strive to achieve a high market share across all segments in Southern Africa; in utility scale, commercial, residential, off-grid and fuel save applications since it has sophisticated solutions for each of the segments. "South Africa is of strategic importance to SMA. It has shown economic resilience through the global financial crisis and its energy demands are growing. The need for businesses to contain the risk of power shortages and Government's policy framework toward a low-carbon future, are making photovoltaics a financially attractive investment for independent power producers, commercial, agricultural and infrastructure users," said Thorsten Ronge.

Ronge added that it made good business sense to locate SMA's inverter factory within the Western Cape's green cluster, close to the supply chain. The Cape Town harbour was another influencing factor for inbound supply of electrical components as well as initiatives with the German South African Chamber in Cape Town which provided multiple levels of support to help SMA set-up here. "We will also work with our customers to transfer knowledge on photovoltaics, since most of them are young entities with little solar experience, as is usual in an upcoming market. This is where our world-renowned Solar Academy will play a key role with case studies, awareness campaigns and best practice."

SMA currently employs 25 staff in South Africa, based in Cape Town and Centurion, as well as service hubs in Bloemfontein and Kimberley. Its customer base extends into Sub-Saharan Africa with a strong focus on Southern and Eastern Africa.