

Disruption, innovation in focus at POWER-GEN & DistribuTECH Africa

Amid widespread market disruption in the global power sector, Africa is faced with a wealth of new opportunities, but the continent will need to address leadership and legislative challenges to capitalise on the change.

This emerged at Africa's premier power sector summit, POWER-GEN & DistribuTECH Africa, which wrapped up at the Sandton Convention Centre on Thursday.

Dr Willie de Beer, power expert and chairperson of the POWER-GEN & DistribuTECH Africa advisory board, said: "When looking at outcomes, the message is clear. We need to address leadership within the industry and make sure we capitalise on all available opportunities."

"Just as we notice the volume of sales decrease, suddenly a host of new opportunities present themselves," he said. "It's a classical new dawn. The way forward, is for industries to expand on the traditional energy business. We need to actively look for opportunities for new relationships with suppliers and private investors in order to advance."

"It is important to remember, we will not always have the current enabling legislation and regulations, in place. However, as strong leaders within the industry, we can make a difference. We need to actively work on making a difference, in the interests of the broader economy, while also keeping the customer in mind, as we are ultimately there to serve a customer. That is the bottom line of our business."

Gareth Gregory, Africa Head, Strategic Energy and Client Delivery in the commercial division, Energy Security Services Africa (ESSA), noted in the closing panel discussion: "It's encouraging, to receive acknowledgement of the fact that regulation is required, as well as the understanding, that the attempts to find a solution are not fast enough. We are representative of the 650 million people across the continent who have never even switched on a light before and are in absolute energy poverty."

"Africans and South Africans within this electricity geography, know what's best, in terms of implementation. We're not saying that international input into this process would be ignored, however, we best understand the challenges being faced and what needs to be done," Gregory said.

"Disruption is here, it's happening and it's on the ground. It's possible that a reason for its speed is the dilution of how much control was previously held by regulators."

New scientific research partnership

Meanwhile, Dr. Carlo Papa, Director of ENEL Foundation Strategic Study Centre which will partner with POWER-GEN & DistribuTECH Africa in a scientific research partnership in 2019, said: "Smart and stable regulatory frameworks are essential for investment in the energy sector. Especially in the electricity sector, for example, when looking at renewable energy investment."

"The scientific research project aims to diffuse the highly complex topic of electricity, by disseminating proper and well prepared information to decision makers and operators to enrich their knowledge and understanding, thus allowing them to act towards a sustainable future."

"We as a research centre and foundation feel an event such as POWER-GEN & DistribuTECH Africa is important for reaching out to share ideas and knowledge. As a knowledge provider, we think it wise to cooperate with an event organiser to correctly frame the discussion and share as much knowledge as possible with participants."

Bold new reach for POWER-GEN 2019

POWER-GEN & DistribuTECH Africa will be co-located with leading African utility sector event, African Utility Week, in 2019, following the acquisition of POWER-GEN & DistribuTECH Africa organisers PennWell by Clarion Events earlier this year.

The events will be hosted with dual industry branding at the Cape Town International Conference Centre from 14 - 16 May, covering industry verticals throughout the value chain, from the generation space all the way through to disruptive technologies. The event will bring together in the region of 450 exhibitors

from across the continent and across the globe to up to 10,000 industry professionals from across the continent.