

EEPCo to construct first waste to energy plant

By Elias Gebreselassie

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The Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation (EEPCo) signed a USD 120 million agreement with Cambridge Industries Limited, a United Kingdom based firm,

to develop what was labeled as the first Sub-Saharan Africa Waste-To-Energy facility. The deal signed on January 4, 2013 at Hilton Addis is for a facility with a capacity to generate 50 Mega Watts (MW) power. The Ethiopian Government will fully finance this particular project from its coffers. The facility to be located in at Repi (Koshe) site will be owned by the state power utility company EEPCo and is expected to provide clean and green power to the national grid while helping to reduce the municipal solid waste, beautify the city and create meaningful employment for the youth. Mihret Debebe CEO of EEPCo said that recent studies has shown that before commissioning the big power projects which are under construction; there is an urgent need to fill the gap in demand, and as such the solution lies in bringing into operation quickly developed power such as this project. “Waste to energy power generation potential exists in 35 cities” The Ethiopian government is finalizing the 25 years integrated plan for the power sector covering from electric power generation up to distribution to end users in the national and regional market. According to a preliminary study done on waste to energy power generation in the country, there is a potential to generate electric power in about 35 cities. EEPCO says the proposed 50 MW Power Plant’s proximity to Addis Ababa will save a significant amount of energy that is otherwise lost in transporting energy from remote locations. Its relative speed of delivery makes it attractive in meeting power sector objectives and has the ability to replace the existing expensive and non-green power plants. It also says the process whereby garbage in each of the city’s districts would be brought to the plant site, where it would be safely processed and transformed into electricity that makes efficient usage of garbage emitted from the city’s residents and industries, and diversifies the current power sources as well as creating power complimentary with other power generation methods like hydro power. “Optimism at the project” Dr. Tewelde Berhan Gebre Egziabher, Director General of the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), says humans in urban areas collect biological materials from rural areas which end up being used as food, feed, fuel, clothing and industrial materials and so on, and as such we discard some of it, creating health and environmental hazards. To clean up Addis Ababa by collecting and utilizing waste using this type of project will help a lot Tewelde said. He further said the Repi waste disposal site which had started back five decades ago, as a safe, distant and secure site, has over the years been subjected to massive amounts of waste and has become part of the city’s landscape because of the expanding urbanization phenomenon. “Instead of suffering the stench of the waste disposal site

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sitting at our home, we can sit with added electricity in the grid, that gives us light at night, cooks our food, that runs washing machines to clean our clothes, that heats the water to wash our bodies and that gives pictures to our TV screens” said Tewelde Berhan. By 2025, the Ethiopian government plans to be a carbon neutral economy, minimizing its Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) emissions which is another GHG to equal absorption rates of forests, thus stopping CO₂ emissions into the atmosphere. Alemayehu Tegenu Minister of Water and Energy (MoWE) said this project is just one more step in Ethiopia’s diversification of energy supply, helping address at least two challenges, particularly helping to meet the power demands of Ethiopia’s fast growing economy and helping to address the management of waste as it seeks to adopt with population pressures, which brings in a high consumption culture which in turn creates a lot of waste. He further said EEPCO in collaboration with the Addis Ababa city Administration, is working to ensure waste collection is streamlined to become efficient using streamlined collection system with new specially designed waste collection vehicles that will in turn create thousands of new jobs, in addition to the 100 or so skilled engineers to be employed to run the facility.