

George Peristeris - President of Greek Association of RES Electricity Producers, speech in Energypress.gr Conference

October 24, 2019

Mr. Minister,

Mr. President,

Professor,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning to all

Today's conference is yet another major effort by the energypress team to have a public debate on energy issues, particularly in RES and storage, and for that I would like to thank the energypress people and personally Mr. Panagoulis for the invitation and also congratulate them on their overall efforts to continuously brief the public audience and provide adequate information in the field of energy.

I would like to point out, of course, that in order for all of us to arrive today and host special conference on Renewables and Energy Storage, it took some people like me to spend the last 25 years of their lives talking on a daily basis about the need for mass penetration of RES, constantly reiterating - even with some indignation I dare to say – our wonder at the attitude of the State to leave untapped opportunities in the country for mature and proven energy storage technologies and also stressing at every opportunity that the only viable solution for the country is the 3-pillar "**RES - Storage - Interconnections**".

And we did all this when nobody or very few people talked about clean energy and energy storage, whilst now there is no one left to talk about. Let me point out that this is a personal recognition and also a great satisfaction for the few friends and associates we have been together fighting for all these years to promote **the only truly clean energy, which is RES.**

I would also like to emphasize one more thing: We are very happy that the new government has set very ambitious RES targets and we are here to support the State's efforts in practice. We are particularly pleased that there is now a notable investment interest in RES. I say this because during the crisis, the truth is that most investors and especially foreigners had left the market and thus very few of us remained in the market continuing the sector's investments. However, there is indeed an investment interest.

But I will repeat: The ambitious goals that have been set will not be achieved unless there is a massive involvement of the State, all the relevant bodies, investors and society in broader terms in the three following pillars: RES - Storage - Interconnections.

Let's look at the above three pillars in summary:

Our view for many years now is that for national, economic and social reasons, domestic energy sources should be optimally utilized. What are our domestic 'fuels'? What does the country have? It has wind and sun, i.e. Renewable Energy Sources, waters and lignite. It must be emphasized that lignite has played a decisive role in Greece's development for decades, in achieving the level of prosperity we enjoy today, whereas it has in general helped the economy, industry, and employment. Given that we are going through a time of gradual withdrawal of lignite, it is imperative to turn massively to other domestic energy sources, namely RES. Let's not think otherwise and deceive ourselves. Really clean energy is only energy from RES. It makes no sense to remove lignite due to that it actually pollutes and then replace it with imported fuels, simply because they pollute less. Indeed, despite being a fossil fuel the natural gas pollutes less and is useful for the system's balance and for stability reasons. However, its use must be rational and targeted. Really clean energy is the energy that has zero pollutants, that is Renewable Energy, and therefore it is needed to dynamically support and turn our focus in a decisive way towards this type of energy.

Let's go now to the investments that need to be made in the area of energy storage. It is a big question mark why for so many years our country has not even acquired the institutional framework that governs these investments. PPC has ready-made pumping projects that - let me put it mildly - are idle and "enjoy the sun", whereas many private investors are ready to make big and small investments in this field. On the other hand, the State has so far chosen to impose a ban on the development of all private investment plans and only to allow the operation of a small and not properly functioning project of the state-owned company in Ikaria. This cannot be continued. And we cannot fail to do the necessary institutional interventions because it is supposed to be a dynamic process and every time we have to do a new study about the new data and elements arising but ultimately we do nothing. What is the regulatory framework? Does it stand for the Laws of Moses that have been written and cannot be rewritten or be changed? So let's make the regulatory framework at last, and if and when developments necessitate a modification, let's modify it. The issue is that we must finally act and do something.

Also when dealing with energy storage, let's not even repeat the mistakes of the past. For example we knew for years the energy problem that Crete will face, but we did nothing to solve it and now we are running with urgent procedures and solutions that are not the best possible ones. We also knew that we had to prepare in time for an era without lignite, but again we were got delayed in planning a rational transition to the new era, and again tried to catch up on the time we lost by doing things in ways that were no longer rational. So let's not make the same mistake with storage. All the studies that have been made and are available to the Competent Authorities for years

point to the need for up to 2 GW of large-scale storage by 2025 - 2026. To achieve this, the relevant investments would already have to be implemented. But nothing has been done yet. There must be an immediate binding timetable for their implementation. Otherwise, in a few years we will be back in a deadlock and resort to untested solutions under the pressure of time, such as for example the imported batteries that contribute zero to our country's GDP, as they have little domestic added value, while on the other hand they contribute a lot to the GDP of the countries that produce and export them. Batteries are essential for specific uses, e.g. in the islands and in other cases of small-scale energy storage needs.

As a country, we need to immediately proceed with certain storage investments that will facilitate the massive penetration of RES, with particular emphasis on the use of mature and proven technologies for decades, with great added value domestically, such as pumping. This is so, because such investments mean thousands of jobs at the same time, salaries for employees, income for insurance funds, increased public revenue, taxes, etc.

Finally in order to achieve the above goals, we must deal with and implement the proper infrastructure needed for interconnection. We have been saying this for years. Huge amounts of money are spent annually by all Greek citizens because of the lack of interconnections. In times of economic difficulties, this is a real waste of resources that unnecessarily burdens every household in the country. Through various utility charges, all Greeks pay a heavy price. Direct investment in integrated interconnection systems is therefore needed. Unfortunately, we have lagged significantly on this goal but even now we have to move quickly not only with the regular interconnection of Crete, which is the big one, but also with other major interconnection projects, such as with the major islands in the Dodecanese and with other interconnections of major island clusters.

Only the simultaneous promotion of all these three categories of investments, meaning RES - Storage - Interconnections, will enable us to achieve national goals, with enormous benefits, economically, environmentally and socially for all Greeks. These three categories constitute a single and complementary set, which could cumulatively exceed EUR 8 billion in investment over the next five years, adding 1.5% growth to the GDP over the corresponding period. Such a development will lay out the foundations for Greece becoming in the 2030s and for the first time in its modern history a clean energy exporter and the "battery" of the European south, which is almost to its entirety a major importer.

We, as an institution, Greek Association of RES Electricity Producers (GAREP), as well as GEK TERNA Group, will help with all our strengths towards the above objectives, as we have been doing for years now. I would like to point out that we are promoting new investments of more than € 1 billion in new RES projects and two major storage projects in Crete and Amfilochia, which once upon commencement, will create around 2,000 new jobs.

I repeat once again, let's not make the mistakes of the past. Let us proceed immediately with proper and binding planning and prove that as Greeks we have the opportunity to be at the forefront of the transition to clean energy. We are fortunate to live in this country of immense natural potential. Let us all work together to take advantage of this potential and deliver to the next generations an energy-wise cleaner, safer and more autonomous Greece, or in other words a better Greece.

Thank you all