



In Nairobi, Kenya

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Landmark Conference Aims to Transform Low Cost Off-grid Lighting Sector

Nairobi, Kenya, May 18 2010 – IFC and the World Bank today began hosting the region's Lighting Africa conference in Nairobi, Kenya as part of an effort to bridge the energy gap in Sub-Saharan Africa through off-grid lighting solutions. Lighting Africa's objective is to transform the lives of 2.5 million people by 2012 by developing a commercially viable platform that can enable the development of low-cost off-grid lighting. It aims to reach 250 million people by 2030.

According to official estimates, Africa will have 700 million people without electricity by 2030. Lighting Africa aims at supporting the populations who do not have access to the grid and rely on kerosene and candles for their lighting needs.

More than 600 participants and 50 exhibitors are attending the second Lighting Africa conference and trade fair, which is introducing a new generation of affordable and better quality off-grid lighting products targeting low-income consumers. Quality products will allow them to realize significant cost savings, gains in productivity to raise their living standards and be less exposed health risks by moving from kerosene to modern off-grid lighting.

The gathering will take stock of the current status of the off-grid lighting sector. It will discuss current trends and the best way forward on quality issues, market development, access to finance, policy challenges and technology innovations.

This new sector received a boost from the signing of a letter of intent to form an industry association dedicated to off-grid lighting solutions. The aim of the association is to formalize the sector growth by setting quality standards and working with governments and multilateral organizations to maintain momentum for developing this market.

According to Dana Rysankova, the World Bank's Program Manager for Lighting Africa, "Africa has moved from the periphery to the center of the off-grid lighting sector. In 2008, there were few products specifically developed for the African market. Today, there are more than 70 products from 50 manufacturers. There is today also a wide variety of goods between \$25-50, and a growing number of good products under \$25."

Entries to Lighting Africa's Outstanding Products Awards demonstrate that quality products can be made available at affordable prices. The Outstanding Products Awards will recognize the best products available in Sub-Saharan African countries and the winners will be announced at a gala dinner on May 18.

Russell Sturm, Head of IFC Climate Change Advisory Services at IFC, said "Consumers are today spending an estimated \$10-17 billion on fuel-based lighting products. This ties 10-30 percent of their disposable income to inefficient lighting with negative health impacts. A new generation of lighting products presented at the trade fair can help fill in the gap in a cleaner, more efficient way until electricity reaches everyone."

Keynote speakers at the conference include Zakari Ayieko, CEO Rural Electrification Authority, Kenya; Johannes Zutt, World Bank Director for Kenya; John Barorot, Chief Technical Officer, Safaricom; and Ogunlade Davidson, Minister of Energy and Water Resources, Sierra Leone. The conference will conclude on May 20.

Note to editors:

Upcoming press releases:

- Winners of Lighting Africa's Outstanding Awards – May 19, 2010
- Key outcomes of the Conference and way forward – May 20, 2010

About Lighting Africa

Lighting Africa, a joint World Bank and IFC program, seeks to accelerate the development of markets for modern off-grid lighting products in Sub-Saharan Africa where an estimated 10 to 30 percent of household incomes is spent on hazardous and low quality fuel-based lighting products. The goal is to mobilize and provide support to the private sector to supply quality, affordable and safe lighting to 2.5 million people by facilitating the sale of 500,000 off-grid lighting units by 2012 while, at the same time, creating a sustainable commercial platform that will realize the vision of providing 250 million people with modern off-grid lighting products by 2030. Promoting the use of improved low cost off-grid lighting technology will provide an avenue for social, health and economic development especially for households and small businesses that will realize significant cost savings and increases in productivity from the transition.

Lighting Africa is implemented in partnership with: the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Energy Sector Management Assistance (ESMAP), The UK Department for International Development (DFID), Good Energies Inc., Luxemburg, The Netherlands, The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Public-Private Infrastructure Advisory Facility (PPIAF), The Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEEP), and the Asia Sustainable and Alternative Energy Program (ASTAE).

About IFC

IFC, a member of the World Bank Group, creates opportunity for people to escape poverty and improve their lives. We foster sustainable economic growth in developing countries by supporting private sector development, mobilizing capital for private enterprise, and providing advisory and risk mitigation services to businesses and governments. Our new investments totaled \$14.5 billion in fiscal 2009, helping channel capital into developing countries during the financial crisis. For more information, visit www.ifc.org.

About the World Bank

The World Bank is a vital source of financial and technical assistance to developing countries around the world, with the mission of global poverty reduction and the improvement of living standards. It is not a bank in the common sense. It is made up of two unique development institutions owned by 185 member countries — the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and the International Development Association (IDA). Each institution plays a different but supportive role in this mission. The IBRD focuses on middle income and creditworthy poor countries, while IDA focuses on the poorest countries in the world. Together, they provide low-interest loans, interest-free credit, and grants to developing countries for education, health, infrastructure, communications, and many other purposes. By doing so, the World Bank concentrates on building the climate for investment, jobs and sustainable growth, so that economies will grow, and investing in and empowering poor people to participate in development. For more information, please visit www.worldbank.org