

Bloomberg, September 23, 2010

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Global Wind Power Capacity May Rival Nuclear Within Four Years

By Jeremy van Loon - Sep 23, 2010 7:03 AM ET

Installed power capacity from wind turbines around the world will probably rival the potential generation of electricity from nuclear plants within four years, the Global Wind Energy Council said.

Installed wind capacity by 2014 will probably reach 400 gigawatts, Steve Sawyer, secretary-general of the council, said in an e-mailed statement. Current nuclear power capacity is about 376 gigawatts, according to the World Nuclear Association.

Investments in wind power last year exceeded money spent on all other energy technologies including nuclear power, according to the International Energy Agency. Fifty-nine reactors are presently under various stages of construction globally, the World Nuclear Association said on its website.

Growth of wind power in China and elsewhere is offsetting a decline in the U.S. and is little changed in Europe this year, GWEC said. China, the world's most populous nation and second-biggest economy, will likely more than double the amount of wind power potential this year to about 18 gigawatts, Bloomberg New Energy Finance estimates.

"As wind power is becoming more competitive, it is rapidly expanding beyond the traditional markets in North America and Europe," Sawyer said. "In fact, around half of the growth is now happening in emerging economies and developing countries."

China is leading the world in clean-technology investments. It attracted \$11.5 billion in financing for wind turbines and other low-carbon equipment in the second quarter, 72 percent higher than the year-earlier period, New Energy Finance said. That's more than the U.S. and Europe combined, it said.

This year wind capacity will reach close to 200 gigawatts with 40 gigawatts of new capacity added. By 2020, there may be as much as 1,000 gigawatts of wind power installed around the globe, GWEC, which promotes wind development, said today.

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