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FEATURED Q&A

Is Chile's Plan for a Fully Renewable Grid too Ambitious?



Chilean presidential candidates, including former President Sebastián Piñera, have pledged to expand the percentage of renewable energy in the country's matrix. // File Photo: Piñera Campaign.

Q Chilean presidential candidate and former President Sebastián Piñera has pledged to enact a plan that will move Chile to a fully renewable electricity grid by 2040, expanding upon major investments the country has already made in renewable energy. Piñera's opponents for the presidency, Beatriz Sánchez and Alejandro Guillier, have also voiced support for increasing renewable energy. Where is Chile's renewables sector headed? Is Piñera's plan—and the time span in which he hopes to achieve it—realistic and the best way to address the country's energy needs? What steps would Chile need to take to create a fully renewable electricity grid?

A Cristián Vallejo, partner at Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP: "Conventional and nonconventional renewables are on the path to becoming the main or sole component of the country's energy matrix by 2050. Chile's successful turn to renewables is mostly the result of the incentives and policies enacted by the current and prior administrations. There is a general consensus on energy matters by the country's political factions, particularly as to the role that renewables must have. This consensus is reflected in the 2050 Energy Policy enacted in 2015. Pursuant to the policy, 'at least' 70 percent of the country's energy matrix is expected to come from renewables by 2050. All presidential candidates agree that the policy must be the framework for Chile's energy development. So, regardless of the outcome of the upcoming presidential election, it is expected that development of renewables in Chile will continue its current path toward becoming the main source of the country's energy matrix, as contemplated by the poli-

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TOP NEWS

OIL & GAS

PDVSA's Buyers Complain of Low-Quality Crude

Venezuelan state oil firm PDVSA has been delivering poor-quality crude to oil refiners in the United States, India and China, leading to repeated complaints, canceled orders and requests for discounts.

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RENEWABLES

Korea's Andes Green Energy to Build \$4.5 Billion Chile Solar Project

The Bundang-Gu Calama project in the Antofagasta region will use a combination of photovoltaic panels and thermal energy to generate electricity overnight.

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OIL & GAS

Mexico's Pemex Fires Workers Over Oil Theft

Mexican state oil company Pemex, headed by José Antonio González Anaya, said it had fired several warehouse workers as part of the company's strategy to crack down on oil theft.

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González Anaya // File Photo: Mexican Government.

OIL & GAS SECTOR NEWS

PDVSA's Buyers Complain of Low-Quality Crude

Venezuelan state oil firm PDVSA has been delivering poor-quality crude to oil refiners in the United States, India and China, leading to repeated complaints, canceled orders and requests for discounts, Reuters reported Wednesday, citing internal PDVSA trade documents and interviews with a dozen oil executives, workers, traders and inspectors. The incidents include oil cargoes that have been soiled with high levels of water, salt or metals that can make it difficult for the refineries to process the crude. The drop in quality is due to a shortage of chemicals and equipment necessary to properly treat and store the oil, which has led to shutdowns or slowdowns at PDVSA facilities, as well as rushed transportation in order to avoid late deliveries, sources told the wire service. U.S. refiner Phillips 66 has canceled at least six crude cargoes due to poor oil quality and has asked for discounts on cargoes that have already been delivered. The canceled shipments had a market value of nearly \$200 million. A former PDVSA employee said state-run China National Petroleum Corp. complained earlier this year of excessive water levels in oil cargoes, and India's Reliance Industries, which operates the world's largest refinery, has repeatedly complained about oil quality, a PDVSA employee told Reuters. Neither Venezuela's oil ministry nor PDVSA responded to Reuters' requests for comment.

Mexico's Pemex Fires Workers Over Oil Theft

Mexican state oil company Pemex on Tuesday said it had fired several warehouse and distribution center workers in Guanajuato State as part of the company's strategy to crack down on oil theft, Reuters reported. The company

rescinded the contracts of four workers due to their links to oil theft at a refinery in the city of Salamanca, where Pemex can process approximately 245,000 barrels per day of crude, according to a Pemex official. The state oil company said it would file criminal complaints

Without exception, any employee linked to crime will be removed immediately."

— Pemex

against the workers and investigate workers at other sites as well. "Without exception, any employee linked to crime will be removed immediately," Pemex said in a statement. The Mexican government estimated that the state oil company sees at least \$1 billion in losses per year due to oil theft by criminal groups.

Peru Sees Investment in E&P Double Year-Over-Year in August

A total of \$38.7 million was invested in the exploration and production of upstream hydrocarbons in Peru in August, the National Society of Mining, Oil and Energy said Tuesday, Andina reported. Peru saw a 102 percent increase in the amount invested in exploration and production for oil and natural gas year-over-year, and a 16 percent increase in spending from the previous month this year. Only \$1 million was allocated for exploration activities, but the remaining \$37.7 million was invested in exploitation.

Mexico Likely to Hold Third Oil and Gas Tender Next Year

Mexican oil regulator the National Hydrocarbons Commission, or CNH, will likely add another oil auction to its 2018 schedule, which will feature conventional onshore oil and gas

NEWS BRIEFS

Renewable Energy Investments Not Very Profitable Yet: BP Chief

The CEO of multinational energy firm BP, Bob Dudley, on Wednesday said the company's renewable energy investments have not earned the company much profit yet, CNBC reported. "We love our wind farms in the United States and our biofuels in Brazil, and we continue to invest in these businesses and they're profitable, but it's fair to say they don't, as yet, make a material difference to the bottom line," Dudley said. While the company plans to continue to invest in renewable sources of energy, the BP executive said the company would still be committed to its oil and gas business, and that it would likely take decades for the global energy market to be able to consistently rely on renewables for a significant portion of its energy needs.

Oil Production at Brazil's Petrobras Increases by 2.8 Percent in September

Brazilian state oil company Petrobras produced an average of 2.79 million barrels of oil and gas per day in September, the company said Wednesday, Reuters reported. The state oil company increased its average oil output by 2.8 percent as compared to the month before and its average natural gas production by 2 percent during the same period.

U.N. Provides Grant to Jamaica for Fighting Climate Change

The United Nations Green Climate Fund has granted \$300,000 to Jamaica to boost the island nation's capacity to develop and put in place strategies to fight climate change, the Jamaica Gleaner reported Tuesday. The money will help pay for consultants to develop a program for engagement with the U.N. fund.

blocks, a senior official said Thursday, Reuters reported. The auction would be the third oil tender in 2018. The bid terms would be announced this year and contracts would most likely be awarded in the summer, according to Juan Carlos Zepeda, the head of the regulator. The regulator is also putting on a deepwater auction next year in the Gulf of Mexico, which is expected to attract some of the world's biggest producers. The auction is set for the end of January. There is a shallow water auction set for March. Zepeda said so-called nonconventional blocks are being analyzed for inclusion in an additional auction. "We are expecting to be ready soon to release the non-conventional [bidding round]," Zepeda said.

RENEWABLES NEWS

Andes Green Energy to Build \$4.5 Billion Chilean Solar Project

South Korean energy company Andes Green Energy is planning a \$4.5 billion solar project in northern Chile that will use a combination of photovoltaic panels and thermal energy to generate electricity overnight, Bloomberg News reported Oct. 13. The Bundang-Gu Calama project in the Antofagasta region is in the last phase of environmental approval and Andes Green Energy plans to start construction for the project in January, according to Cristian Linoqueo, the head of sustainability for the company's Chile unit. The company plans to have the Bundang-Gu Calama project fully operational by 2022. Renewable energy sources made up 12 percent of the country's energy last year, according to Bloomberg News. The government aims to increase the percentage to 20 percent, excluding hydropower, by 2025. The government of President Michelle Bachelet said that at the pace the renewables sector is progressing, it may even reach that goal five years early. The project will have a total of 1,000 megawatts of capacity, with 700 MW coming from standard PV panels and 300 MW coming from solar-thermal technology, using

the heat from sun to produce energy. Andes Green Energy is aiming to sell the energy produced at Bundang-Gu Calama through bilateral contracts to mining companies in the region. The company will acquire panels and investment from South Korea and is arranging for financing with Korean banks. Andes Green

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cy. Piñera's plan is very ambitious. The goals set forth in the policy with respect to the participation of renewables in the country's energy matrix, namely, 'at least' 60 percent by 2035 and 70 percent by 2050, are more realistic. Given the short presidential terms in Chile (four years without the possibility of immediate reelection), it is unlikely that, if elected, Piñera will have enough time to take and implement all necessary actions to effectively 'accelerate' the goals for renewables set forth in the policy. In order for Chile to create a fully renewable electricity grid, among other measures, it must 1) continue implementing the actions outlined in the policy to achieve the goals for renewables set forth therein, 2) take appropriate actions to ensure that all required changes and investments in the transmission system are made in a timely manner to address the issues that renewables face in this regard, 3) resolve all environmental- and community opposition-related issues that hamper development of certain renewable projects, 4) resolve existing issues relating to land- and water-securing processes that affect development of certain renewables, and 5) update the laws and regulations governing energy distribution."

A **Leni Berliner, president of Energy Farms International:** "The proposed targets of having an all-electric transit system and an electrical grid powered 100 percent by renewable fuels by 2040 are certainly feasible. The first target is an emissions-reduction goal, and will greatly increase demand for renewably generated electricity. The environmental, health and trade benefits of meeting such targets are obvious. Chile has

Energy is also arranging a second project that will use the same technology and be similar in size, and is planned for the Tarapaca region. The company is also looking to expand to other parts of Latin America, including Peru and Panama, Executive Director Carlos Sanchez Vergara said.

the supply chain and access to engineering technologies for electric vehicles and for efficient (i.e. 'smart'), low-emission and resilient generation, storage, transmission and distribution from power from sun, wind, waste and run-of-river hydro. The challenge lies in getting everyone to pull in the same direction, putting the pieces together and paying for it. Investment to meet the targets must be carefully coordinated in time and among multiple entities. Piñera should create a public-private partnership (P3) to have responsibility for meeting both targets. The P3 should have a life cycle distinct from the government budget, and be financed and empowered to propose legislation and changes to power-industry structures and practices. It would offer support to municipal entities to help them participate in electrifying transport and grid renewal, including decommissioning, tariff setting, development of requests for proposal, project finance, technical education, operations and maintenance. The P3 should have two boards: governing and advisory. The former should include representatives from local and national governmental bodies, financial institutions, private industry, small business and community organizations. Experts from other countries that have installed several gigawatts of renewable power should be included on the advisory board."

A **Sergio Bitar, nonresident senior fellow at the Inter-American Dialogue, former Chilean senator and cabinet minister:** "The push to change the energy matrix began under the current administration of President Michelle Bachelet. The government has achieved a substantive transformation of the sector,

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POLITICAL NEWS

Committee Rejects Charges Against Brazil's Temer

A committee of the lower house of Brazil's Congress on Wednesday rejected corruption charges leveled against President Michel Temer related to JBS, the world's largest meatpacking company, Reuters reported. The committee rejected the charges on a 39-26 vote. The full lower house still must weigh in on the charges, but is also expected to reject them in a vote next week. Temer was accused



Temer // File Photo: Brazilian Government.

of accepting bribes and acceding to the payment of hush money to jailed former Chamber of Deputies Speaker Eduardo Cunha. Temer has denied wrongdoing, and his attorneys have argued that the charges against him were based on an inconclusive recording that was secretly made by former JBS Chairman Joesley Batista. In August, lower house members rejected earlier graft charges against Temer, in which prosecutors accused the president of arranging to receive \$11.8 million in bribes from JBS. In their debate Wednesday, members of the leftist Workers' Party argued that Temer should stand trial, saying the charges against him were more serious than those leveled against former President Dilma Rousseff of the Workers' Party, who was impeached last year on accusations of violating budgetary rules. However, Temer's allies in the lower chamber argued Temer should be allowed to serve out the rest of his term for the sake of the country's political and economic stability. Temer's supporters say he has dug Brazil out of its most severe recession ever, curbed inflation and has restored Brazilians' purchasing power.

THE DIALOGUE CONTINUES

Will Temer Boost Brazil's Oil Sector?

Q In its first oil auction since December 2015, Brazil last month saw mixed results, only selling one out of 76 offshore blocks on offer at the highly productive Santos basin, but selling 10 offshore blocks, including eight in the Campos basin, for a record \$1.19 billion, to Exxon Mobil. Six of the blocks were sold to the consortium between the oil major and state-controlled oil company Petrobras. The auction was seen as a bellwether for the country's oil sector following a massive corruption scandal at Petrobras and President Michel Temer's market-friendly reforms aimed at attracting investment. What do the results mean for Brazil's oil sector? Were Temer's reforms successful? What will it take for Brazil to attract even more investment at future oil auctions?

A Cleveland M. Jones, researcher at the National Institute of Oil and Gas, member of the geosciences advisory board at NXT Energy Solutions and professor of geology at the State University of Rio de Janeiro: "I expect significant interest in the second and third rounds of the pre-salt areas set for Oct. 27. I don't expect many companies to actually bid, but do expect big numbers. The numbers will naturally be big from the start, since the minimum bids are extremely high, but I think most of the few areas to be offered will be sold, maybe even with premiums. If this plays out, it will be mere recognition of the fact that despite low and stable oil prices, a generally unenthusiastic industry environment and Brazilian political and economic problems, the areas on sale are without equal in the world, at the moment. The pre-salt blocks are the only type of area that will be economical under even the most dire forecasts for the industry,

including prices, demand conditions and development costs. Thus, there is no other region in the world for the big players to allocate the bulk of their investments in future exploration plays. The U.S. Gulf of Mexico is one, but with smaller payouts. The Mexican Gulf of Mexico is another, but with higher uncertainty regarding the prize. The Equatorial Margin (e.g. Liza) is another, but with higher uncertainty and riskier and more difficult operating environment. More and more, investments will have to be concentrated on prime areas with a large potential prize, even if they demand high investments up-front. In the pre-salt, the payoff is almost certain, and those areas allow projects that can produce hundreds of thousands of barrels of oil per day to be developed as one large project. That is the strength of the large oil companies, since they are specialists at managing megaprojects, and can seek efficiencies of scale, while avoiding having to handle many smaller projects in order to attain the same base production. Given that these projects take several years to reach maturity, and many more during which production occurs, the current Brazilian problems are not the major threat or impediment to the success of these rounds. The extremely large bonus and required investments will dissuade all but the largest and strongest companies, but those companies can afford to pay what it takes to ensure that they gain access to very large base production, at very favorable production costs, and under safe (due to well understood production arrangements) and secure (due to the legal framework) operating environment."

EDITOR'S NOTE: The comment above is a continuation of the Q&A published in the Oct. 13 issue of the Energy Advisor.

NEWS BRIEFS

Prosecutors Charge Former Head of Brazil's Olympic Committee

The former head of Brazil's Olympics committee, Carlos Nuzman, on Wednesday was charged with racketeering, money laundering and breaking currency laws, the Financial Times reported. Former Rio de Janeiro State Governor Sérgio Cabral is currently imprisoned in connection with the case, and Leonardo Gryner, the former director of the country's Olympics committee, and Brazilian businessman Arthur Soares, have also been charged. They have been accused of coordinating bribes in connection with the awarding of the 2016 Olympic Games location to Brazil.

Guatemalan Court Orders Ministry to Withdraw Warning to CICIG Chief

Guatemala's Constitutional Court on Wednesday ordered the country's foreign ministry to withdraw a warning to Iván Velásquez, the head of U.N.-backed anti-corruption agency CICIG, that he "refrain from interfering" in the country's internal affairs, the Associated Press reported. The ministry issued the warning in renewing Velásquez's visa for one year. President Jimmy Morales earlier this year unsuccessfully tried to expel Velásquez after he supported an investigation into alleged funding irregularities in Morales' presidential campaign.

Brazilian Senate Returns Neves to His Seat

The Brazilian Senate on Tuesday rejected the Supreme Court's move to place Senator and former presidential candidate Aécio Neves under house arrest, the Associated Press reported. The legislative body voted to return the suspended senator to his post after the conservative politician, who is a close ally of President Michel Temer, was accused of obstruction of justice in a corruption case.

Mexico's Attorney General Resigns

Mexican Attorney General Raúl Cervantes resigned on Monday in a move that may pave the way to an overhaul of the country's judicial system, The Wall Street Journal reported. Cervantes has been under fire since his appointment as attorney general last year due to his close ties to President Enrique Peña Nieto and his longtime membership in the ruling PRI political party. Cervantes made the surprise announcement during a hearing in the Senate. "This is not about names. This is about building better institutions," he said. His resignation could clear the path to naming an independent prosecutor who would have a nine-year term and who cannot be fired by the president. The naming of a new independent prosecutor is seen as key to overhauling the country's judicial system, where a mere 3 percent of crimes are investigated, and the justice system is seen as being highly politicized. A spokesman for Peña Nieto declined to comment on Cervantes' resignation. Though the position of independent prosecutor has been in place since 2014, the enabling legislation to name that prosecutor has not been passed, and no prosecutor has been named to the position. It is not immediately clear whether Peña Nieto will name a new attorney general in the coming days. The head of legal and international affairs at the attorney general's office will serve as interim attorney general, a government official said.

ECONOMIC NEWS

U.S., Mexico, Canada Extend NAFTA Talks Into Next Year

Top negotiators from the United States, Mexico and Canada on Tuesday wrapped up their fourth round of talks on renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, with a sense of mutual exasperation and said they were extending the talks into next year.

In abandoning their goal to conclude the talks this year, the three countries' representatives said the negotiations would run through next March and added that they would extend the amount of time between negotiating rounds in order to allow more time to consider proposals, Bloomberg News reported. "New proposals have created challenges, and ministers discussed the significant conceptual gaps among the parties," said U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, reading from a joint statement at the close of the round of talks,

 **"I'm focusing on trying to get a good agreement."**

— Robert Lighthizer

just outside Washington. "Ministers have called upon all negotiators to explore creative ways to bridge these gaps." Lighthizer added that he was "surprised and disappointed by the resistance to change." Meantime, Mexican Economy Minister Ildefonso Guajardo said there were limits on what Mexico could accept, and Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland criticized what she called a "winner-take-all mindset." The United States has been the target of criticism in the talks for pushing controversial demands on dairy, automotive content, government procurement, dispute panels and a sunset clause, which the other two countries have rejected. "Yes we want an agreement, yes we want to find a win-win situation, but this won't be at the detriment to our national interests," Guajardo told reporters after the joint news conference ended. Freeland added that a deal to improve NAFTA is "absolutely achievable," though she also said that an approach that seeks to benefit all three countries cannot be reached with "an approach that seeks to undermine NAFTA rather than modernize it." U.S. President Donald Trump has called the 1994 trade accord a disaster and has threatened to pull the United States out of it. Lighthizer told reporters that he is not focused on the possibility of the U.S. withdrawing from NAFTA. "I'm focusing on trying to get a good agreement," he said. He added, however, that the United States, Canada and Mexico would do "just fine" without the trade accord.

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and it is expected that the proportion of renewables in the energy matrix will continue to grow. During the previous administration of former President Sebastián Piñera, the country faced a grave energy crisis and a loss of competitiveness. The new stimulus, tenders for blocks of time, investments in transmission and the 2050 energy plan created under the direction of Minister Máximo Pacheco, all managed to unite the public and private wills and initiate a new cycle for the sector. Bids have been tendered and assigned for less than \$50 per MWh. The goals of the current government made in collaboration with COP21 are to reach an energy matrix that reduces CO2 emissions by 30 percent per unit of production and to reach 70 percent of power generated by renewable energy by 2050. What's more, given the absence of sufficient public-sector capacity to partner with and push the private sector, the government sent and won approval for an expansion of powers for the National Oil Company, or Enap, to generate and distribute electricity. Therefore, what appears to be the proposal from Piñera is not a new goal, but rather merely a reaffirmation of ongoing plans, especially if hydroelectricity is included. The plans are equally part of the platforms of the other candidates, as well. In addition, the program Guillier proposed suggests endowing the country with a public solar energy company that will facilitate the sector's orderly expansion, provide support for projects with the private sector and develop more national engineering and research capacity. This type of public initiative has been rejected by conservative parties that support Piñera, who maintain that the market is the only operator and investor in energy. The shortage of fossil fuels in Chile is becoming a tremendous stimulus for renewable energy, and research shows that the Atacama Desert receives the most solar radiation in the world. Thankfully, there is broad internal consensus on this front."



Sara Larraín, executive director at Programa Chile Sustentable:

"Candidates for Chile's presidential elections next November have announced their commitments to driving the energy transition, based on renewable sources. These kinds of statements on the future of clean energy are not new, but today they are more concrete in terms of quotas and timelines than during the 2013 presidential campaign. Why? Officially, Chilean commitments on CO2 reductions in the Paris Agreement are the reason proposals are more concrete. But in reality, it is that Chile's population, in local communities and regions, consistently oppose the construction of coal and gas thermoelectric plants, even if they obtain environmental licenses from government. In addition, the incredible decrease in the cost of solar and wind technology, and the arrival of new energy investors to the so concentrated Chilean energy market, have also influenced the change. A third key element was the reform of the electricity auction regulations in terms of the size of the energy blocks and the timeline to develop the projects, which allowed new companies to participate in the tenders. In 2016, almost 84 companies participated in the 12.43 GWh public auction to supply regulated consumers from 2021 on. Solar and wind generation was 70 percent of the offers. This trend continues today. Last week, the Chilean National Energy Commission received 24 offers in a small 2.2 GWh public tender to supply regulated energy consumers from 2024 to 2043. All offers were for renewables energies generation. In this context: with adequate regulation, more competition and citizen pressure, it makes sense for presidential candidates to push forward with this plan."

The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can contact editor Gene Kuleta at gkuleta@thedialogue.org.

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