



Solar center geared towards developing countries to be built in China

May, 2006: The Chinese government and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) are pushing the creation of a new center to help expand the application of solar in developing countries. The International Centre for the Promotion and Transfer of Solar Energy Technology (ISEC), to be located in Lanzhou, China as an extension of the Gansu Natural Energy Research Institute, will promote local manufacturing as well as offer R&D services for PV and solar thermal.

Vienna-based UNIDO is putting up \$300,000 for what Emilio Vento, senior officer for UNIDO's investment and technology promotion branch, terms an >>initial phase<< while the Chinese government has so far promised 90 million CNY (\$11.2 million). Vento says UNIDO is also seeking funds from >>a major multinational donor,<< and has already approached the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and development banks for Asia and Africa.

First proposed at the International Solar Energy Symposium on Developing Countries in Oct. 2005 in Lanzhou, ISEC is being pushed quickly by the Chinese government, which has already acquired the land and is expected to begin construction in the spring. Among its activities, ISEC will develop and upgrade solar technologies, establish standards, promote international cooperation, and offer training workshops and seminars for developing countries. As for China's interest in starting up ISEC, Vento cites the country's renewable portfolio standard, although there have still been no specific targets announced for solar (see PI 1/2006, p. 38). According to another source, ISEC is expected to push for the creation of factories to produce solar-grade silicon.