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BY GEORGE GETZE

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The U.S. has lagged in developing one of the world's greatest natural resources, the earth's internal heat, according to Joseph Barnea, director of the resources and transport division of the United Nations.

Barnea said in Anaheim Thursday that this situation is about to change.

He predicted that as soon as 1975 the U.S. will produce more electrici-

ty from geothermal sources than any other country, and that California will have become the world's "geothermal capital."

Barnea was the chief speaker at the closing session of the 42nd annual meeting of the Society of Exploration Geophysicists this week at the Anaheim Convention Center.

He said that according to the Hickel Report of the Interior Department, the United States will be producing 395 million kilowatts of geothermal electricity by the year 2000.

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"This will require gigantic exploration efforts, and a vast outlay of capital," Barnea said.

Private industry is already putting up some of the capital and exploration effort required, with both oil and electricity companies taking the lead.

Barnea said production of electrical power is only one of many possible applications of the heat energy stored beneath the earth's crust in such places as Imperial Valley and Sonoma County.

"The Russians are already using water from hot water wells to heat buildings in winter and cool them in summer," he said.

"Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland, used to be known as a smoky city because of the fossil fuel burnt there," Barnea said.

"Now they use hot water to make power and to heat their buildings, and the air of Reykjavik is clear and pure."

Barnea said geothermal energy also can be used

for the desalting of brackish and salt water, and for the extraction of minerals from deep well water and ocean water. In the Arctic region of Siberia, the Soviets are now able to keep mines operating during the winter because of heating with hot water from wells.

According to Barnea, geothermal reservoirs such as those under the Imperial Valley will last forever, provided that no more water than nature replaces is taken out.

Barnea added that depletion of geothermal reservoirs can be reduced or avoided entirely by recharging them with used geothermal water, or with brackish water from surface bodies of water.

He said that the United Nations will hold an international symposium on geothermal energy in 1974, and that it had been suggested that the meeting be held in California.

"Nobody has so far officially invited the U.N. to California for that meeting, but if somebody does the invitation will be accepted," Barnea said.