



AT OAS MEETING, OFFICIALS AND EXPERTS CONSIDER HEMISPHERIC ENERGY SITUATION March 3, 2008

National authorities and international experts from Organization of American States (OAS) member countries are meeting at the organization's headquarters, examining the hemisphere's situation with sustainable energy. The aim is to deepen knowledge and exchange among the relevant energy sector stakeholders, in order to improve the sustainability of the sector in the Americas.

In his remarks at the opening session, OAS Secretary General José Miguel Insulza said the conference provides a unique opportunity to develop “a common strategy that harmonizes our energy goals, outlines our commitments to strengthening energy sustainability, and increases our energy security.”

Insulza stressed the OAS' very strong commitment to promoting an environmentally-sound and secure energy future for our region. “It is true that the Americas is blessed with a wide diversity of energy resources, in particular, renewable natural resources—such as solar, wind, geothermal, ocean, and biomass—which may be converted into clean energy in the form of electricity and/or liquid transportation fuels such as ethanol and bio-diesel,” he stated, citing significant challenges related to the region's ability to efficiently and sustainably manage these natural resources and to adequately distribute them throughout the hemisphere.

The Inter-American Meeting of National Authorities and Experts on Energy for Sustainable Development in the Americas was chaired by Panama's Permanent Representative to the OAS, Ambassador Aristides Royo, in his capacity as Chairman of the Joint Working Group of the Permanent Council and the Permanent Executive Committee of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CEPCIDI) on the Follow-up to the Declaration of Panama: Energy for Sustainable Development. The hemisphere's foreign ministers had issued the Declaration at the OAS General Assembly session, in Panama City in June last year.

Ambassador Royo underlined the need to take advantage of an expanded and diversified energy matrix as well as of the efficiency in production and consumption and cooperation, “to promote prosperity for the citizens of the Americas.” Energy integration

spurs development, more efficient and rational use of resources, and better marketing of energy products and services, he noted, calling for continued integration of energy systems and networks. Royo urged the governments to take into account the “serious harm” being done to the planet by current energy production and consumption practices, harm that includes an increase in the frequency of natural disasters that affect the most vulnerable nations of the Americas.

Among other issues, the officials and experts are discussing the status of the energy sector in the hemisphere; challenges to energy for sustainable development; expansion and diversification of the energy matrix to ensure access to energy and its availability; efficiency of energy production and consumption; good energy management; and energy cooperation and integration in the hemisphere.

Expert presenters included Mark Lambrides, Chief of the Energy Division of the OAS Department of Sustainable Development, who provided a hemispheric and subregional overview, stressing consumption patterns that forecast a significant increase in demand for energy. He noted as well that rural electrification is about more than lighting, but also addresses urban poverty, among other challenges.

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