

Ambassador Lomellin's Draft Remarks for Networking Event: "Clean Energy and Transport Solutions in an Urban Hemisphere: Lessons from the Americas."

April 10, 4:30-6:30 p.m., Red Pavilion – Room 23

Good Afternoon. I am delighted to be with you here today, and I want to welcome each and every one of you joining us this afternoon to learn and share experiences on advancing sustainable development through collaboration and innovation at the local level.

Today's event is an opportunity to delve into some of the clean energy and transport solutions emerging from the Americas — proven, valuable, and tangible lessons and tools to help move us all towards more sustainable and resilient cities and communities. Earlier in my career, I worked for the Mayor in my hometown of Chicago, and I learned quite a bit about the importance of delivering city services that are timely and effective, such as affordable housing and public safety.

As the U.S. Ambassador to the Organization of American States, I have had the opportunity to support the work of the OAS on sustainable cities and communities. I have been very interested in learning how some of the problems facing local authorities have changed, and, how we are still struggling to find solutions for some of the same problems, including waste disposal to improve

sanitation systems and reducing pollution due to increased usage of passenger vehicles.

Urbanization in the Americas and around the world has experienced explosive growth over the last 30 years. The hemisphere is the most urbanized in the world, with cities housing more than 80 percent of the population. This trend could pose serious threats to sustainable development, most notably infrastructure, housing, the availability and use of common spaces, transportation, waste management, human and environmental health, food security, energy security, citizen security, and susceptibility to natural and man-made disasters, especially climate change and sea level rise.

With these and other issues in mind, a growing number of mayors and municipal leaders in Latin America and the Caribbean are beginning to take a systematic and long-term view of the sustainability and resilience of their cities and communities. Sustainable transport innovations are at the forefront of resilient urban development. Right here in Medellín, recent efforts to modernize public transit, create better public spaces, and improve safety are helping transform the city. These projects include the development of bus rapid transit called MetroPlus and the creation of a bike-share program.

In Mexico City, the pioneer mobility project, Metrobus Line 4, utilizes all of the components of a successful bus rapid transit system.

The United States Government strongly supports the development and continued progress of sustainable communities. In the United States, we define sustainable communities as places that have a variety of housing and transportation options, with destinations near our homes and work. As a result, they tend to have lower transportation costs, reduce air pollution and storm water runoff, decrease infrastructure costs, preserve historic properties and sensitive lands, save people time in traffic, and meet demands for different types of housing at different price points. Sustainable communities support economic growth that improves access and quality of life for all, rather than leaving disadvantaged populations further behind. Sustainable communities are also better able to withstand economic and environmental changes through decisions that make them more livable today and more resilient tomorrow.

One of the programs the United States is implementing to promote the development of diverse, accessible, and greener cities is through an initiative called the Partnership for Sustainable Communities. Since 2009, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Transportation, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have been working together to help

communities build stronger regional economies, improve their housing and transportation options, and protect the environment. The Partnership is a one-stop shop that offers federal resources through technical assistance, planning grants, and implementation tools and strategies to achieve their vision of sustainable growth. To date, the Partnership has provided more than \$4 billion in funding for projects in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. To guide its work, the Partnership developed six livability principles in order to: 1) provide more transportation choices, such as creation of more bike-friendly streets, bus and commuter rail options, 2) promote equitable, affordable housing, 3) enhance economic competitiveness, 4) support existing communities through revitalization, public works investments and protection of rural landscapes , 5) coordinate and leverage federal policies and investment, and 6) recognize the unique value of communities by investing in healthy, safe and walkable neighborhoods.

Another example of the United States Government's support for engaging communities that are taking bold action to ensure sustainable development is the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Climate Showcase Communities, which you will be hearing about later in this session from Megan-Samenfeld Specht of the EPA. The Climate Showcase Communities embody the principles of the Partnership for Sustainable Communities through support for 50 communities in the United States that adopted and implemented innovative models of climate

change mitigation that can save energy and money, improve public health, and enhance the quality of life in neighborhoods across the country.

In March, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry issued new policy guidance on climate change that instructs our embassies to engage with host governments in order to encourage climate mitigation and at the sub-national level. Policies on building codes, transportation system design, land use planning, as well as enhanced cooperation among national and subnational actors, will strengthen the sustainable development of cities and communities. Secretary Kerry's guidance underscores the United States' belief that the development of more sustainable, resilient cities and communities in Latin America and the Caribbean is important for the hemisphere's long-term economic growth and prosperity, efficient use and development of energy, and the protection of our environment and human health.

Since 2012, the U.S. Mission to the OAS has given over two million dollars to the OAS to implement two programs that enhance hemispheric cooperation on sustainable cities and communities. During the first phase of this program, the OAS provided 14, fifty-thousand dollar matching grants to local NGOs, community associations and academic institutions in Central America and the Caribbean to implement innovative, sustainable development initiatives. Two of our grantees from Guatemala and Costa Rica will be the featured presenters for

today's winning presentations that highlight their innovative solutions to energy and transport challenges in their communities. Our grantee from Guatemala will discuss its work with eleven communities in constructing twelve biodigesters to convert bio-waste, food waste and other organic materials into clean electricity that are used for cooking and lighting in hundreds of households where they were installed. Our grantee from Costa Rica will highlight political advocacy to minimize traffic through development of bicycle infrastructure.

As we begin the second phase of this program with the OAS, I am proud to announce that the U.S. Mission is funding a second tranche of matching grants for Central America and the Caribbean that will focus on promoting subnational dialogue, capacity building, and peer learning on sustainable urban development and municipal governance. Richard Huber from the OAS will provide a more detailed description of phase two of our program. We are also supporting a case study to compile a pilot eco-citizen map for Medellin, Cairo, Egypt, and Casablanca, Morocco that utilizes geo-spatial technology and emphasizes citizen participation and improved decision-making in urban health.

In addition, last year my office organized two meetings of mayors and other authorities from the Americas, including the United States. The first meeting took place during the OAS General Assembly in Antigua, Guatemala and the second

occurred in Miami. The objective of both meetings was to support dialogue on hemispheric cooperation, the exchange of knowledge, and the implementation of best practices related to municipal development, economic opportunity and democratic governance. This dialogue has been an important and substantive conversation to enhance the development of sustainable cities and communities, and my office will continue to support follow-up to these meetings in 2014.

In closing, I hope that our event today will provide new and innovative ideas to address clean energy and transport challenges in the Americas, encourage effective and sustained collaboration and exchanges of information between municipal leaders and governments with their counterparts, and improve the quality of governance throughout the hemisphere. I look forward to seeing the presentations and listening to your respective ideas on innovative solutions and other recommendations that contribute to fostering and strengthening sustainable cities and communities. Thank you.

