

Closing Remarks
Sherry Tross, Executive Secretary for Integral Development
Organization of American States

for the Networking Event
“Low Carbon Solutions in an Urban Hemisphere: Lessons from the Americas”
WORLD URBAN FORUM
Medellin, Colombia, April 10, 2014

We have heard from experienced practitioners from different communities across the Americas who discussed strategies and tools they have used to successfully promote clean energy and sustainable transportation solutions. Implementers from San Jose (Costa Rica), Salt Lake City (USA), Baja Verapaz department (Guatemala), and central New York (USA) presented on their experiences including the role of community engagement.

Last year, when we launched the first round of 14 grants, we had great expectations. Those expectations have been met, and in many cases, surpassed. These projects that are almost completed have contributed a vast array of valuable information on capacity building, technology transfer, and citizen participation -- and generated replicable projects that are suitable for scaling up.

1. **In Grenada**, OAS has supported the recycling of fish waste to manufacture a protein product that will lower the cost of poultry feed and significantly improve the livelihoods of Grenada’s farmers while avoiding putting noxious organic wastes in the local landfill.

This project has scaled up and just received an additional \$400,000 from the IDB;

2. **In Nicaragua**, the OAS supported the installation of 30 stand-alone Photovoltaic Systems for rural electrification of local communities; and
3. **In Nevis**, where I was born, we are helping to build community resilience to drought, flooding, hurricanes and other natural hazards in various communities.

Success is infectious. We have heard from many individuals and organizations that want to be part of the solution and who have developed the technical capacity to implement innovative techniques to advance responsible and sustainable growth.

And so, I am proud to announce today that the Organization of American States (OAS) Sustainable Communities in Central America and the Caribbean Project, and funded by the U.S. Permanent Mission to the OAS, is announcing a 2nd round of grants to promote urban sustainability.

This new tranche of grants will be awarded on a competitive basis to community associations, academic institutions and non governmental organizations in OAS member countries in Central America and the Caribbean in order to finance community-based, collaborative initiatives geared toward impacting change and developing sustainable models in four key areas: Clean Energy and Energy Efficiency; Resilience to Natural

Hazards; Sustainable Transport Solutions; and Waste management, Recycling (including electronic waste) and Improved Water Resource Management.

Specific to today's networking event, I note that each of the twinning examples presented focuses on a whole range of issues, and involve a wide range of actors from two or more twinned communities. A good twinning partnership can bring many benefits to a community including the sharing of best practices and lessons learned. We are hoping that these twinning relationships will represent a long-term commitment between the partners, evolving as necessary, to remain cutting edge and meet the needs of future generations.

Beyond the twinning initiatives, this program is bringing together local elected officials and citizens to share ideas and develop community-based solutions. In December, we had an opportunity to host in Miami a forum for mayors. Mayors from developed and developing countries alike agreed on the need to promote cooperation among city leaders, managers, business leaders and community partners in support of the growth of sustainable and resilient communities in the Americas. Another positive outcome was a clear expression of intention to bolster regional cooperation, improve the quality of municipal governance in the hemisphere and establish a framework for effective collaboration and exchanges between regional municipal leaders and counterparts in the United States.

Finally, I see several recurring themes and lessons:

1. The concept of good governance and people-to-people interactions in solving technological challenges such as air and noise pollution, climate change impacts such as drought and fires, is a backbone of twinning.
2. Twinning is about bottom-up and building on the commitment of individuals to provide real opportunities to make a difference.
3. Nothing can kill a small grass roots initiative quicker than red tape so it's important to keep bureaucracy to a minimum.
4. Twinning can be a vehicle for deepened cooperation, contributing to a wide range of issues that are important for the OAS such as democracy, good governance, and sustainable development.
5. Cooperation, done right, can be a powerful catalyst for positive change. An alliance of committed partners with a clear mission and the capacity and willingness to act can make a difference.

And so, I believe that the EPA/OAS concept of twinning municipalities under a common theme to learn from each other and take action is a winning formula for joint problem solving and for securing a brighter, sustainable future.

In closing, I wish to specially thank all our partners, at EPA, the US Mission to the OAS, and particularly our grantees for your support and commitment. Let's continue the good work together.

Thank you.