



## **PUBLIC DISCUSSION FORUM ON ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE EDUCATION**

**9:30 AM**

### **Talking Points for**

**V. Sherry Tross**  
**Executive Secretary for Integral Development**  
**Organization of American States**

#### ***Welcome Remarks and Introduction***

- **Ms. Sherry Tross**, Executive Secretary, SEDI, OAS

#### ***Keynote address***

- **Bill Wetzel**, Director, Clinton Global Initiative University

**16 January 2013**

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- Good morning. I am pleased to welcome you today to this Public Discussion Forum on Energy and Climate Change Education, hosted by the Organization of American States under the auspices of the Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas, also known as ECPA. The purpose of our debate today is to identify ways to advance greater energy and climate change awareness, education and literacy across the Americas.
  - At the OAS we are firmly committed to supporting the countries of the Americas in their efforts to improve sustainability. For almost 50 years, the OAS, through its Department of Sustainable Development, has been working closely with the governments of the Americas to address this challenge.
  - At the Department of Sustainable Development, the Energy and Climate Change Mitigation Section implements a program to assist OAS Member States with improving access to clean, reliable and cost-effective energy solutions. ECPA is the main conduit used by the OAS to deliver most of its technical assistance on energy and climate change to its Member States.
  - ECPA is a hemispheric mechanism to foster partnerships for greater dialogue, collaboration and awareness on energy and climate. This effort was launched at the 2009 Summit of the Americas held in Trinidad and Tobago where the leaders of the Western Hemisphere underscored that energy and climate change are among the



most important issues confronting our future and they reaffirmed their commitment to work together towards a clean energy future.

- ECPA is a flexible mechanism through which governments, civil society, and the private sector can implement bilateral or multinational initiatives in order to promote clean energy, energy security, or energy efficiency; reduce energy poverty; curb greenhouse gas emissions, and help build a better energy infrastructure for a more sustainable Americas.
- Joining ECPA is voluntary, allowing every country in the Americas to participate in initiatives that reflect their priorities. Governments may work jointly or on their own accord to lead initiatives, finance activities, or create policy and legal frameworks that favor low carbon economic growth.
- Since 2009 the OAS administers the ECPA Clearinghouse, designed to further energy and climate cooperation and dialogue among governments, multilateral organizations, NGOs, the private sector and academia in the Americas. Over the course of 2014, in its ECPA Clearinghouse capacity, the Department of Sustainable Development will convene four energy and climate forums in the United States and three sub-regional technical workshops to address various aspects of the energy and climate change agenda in the Americas.
- Over the past five years, the OAS has implemented several activities geared toward advancing greater awareness, literacy and education on energy and climate in our Hemisphere.
- In the Caribbean, the OAS launched the Caribbean Energy Education and Awareness Program to help build human and institutional capacity to support sustainable energy projects and programs among officials, technicians, businesses, financial institutions, and most importantly, among teachers, students, and the general public. The Caribbean Energy Education and Awareness Program specifically addresses primary and secondary schools and includes a teacher's resource booklet, a student textbook and even a board game and memo cards intended for students, as well as an interactive DVD intended for both teachers and students. The OAS will replicate this highly successful program in the Dominican Republic under the umbrella of ECPA.
- Additionally, the OAS is engaged in the implementation of three ECPA initiatives dealing with awareness, literacy and education on energy and climate.
  - The first one is the ECPA Energy Efficiency Working Group. Under this initiative, the OAS is supporting the Government of Mexico as chair of the



Working Group in its dissemination of best practices in energy efficiency policy and regulation. Since 2012, Mexican experts have been providing their technical expertise in energy efficiency to government officials of almost every country in the region through seminars, workshops and technical exchange missions.

- The second one is the ECPA initiative on Sustainable Communities in Central America and the Caribbean. This initiative is focused on economic development, housing, pollution prevention, environmental protection and sustainable transport. This initiative is supporting new policies with an emphasis on public transport, cycling and walking, sustainable urban development, waste management, climate, energy and transport, traffic reduction, and outreach and awareness.
  - The third one is the ECPA initiative on Renewable Energy and Climate Science for the Americas: Metrology and Technology Challenges. Under this initiative, technical staff at national metrology institutions across the Americas will receive training on greenhouse gas emissions measurement, and renewable energy and energy efficiency measurements and standards.
- Of course, other regional partners are leading efforts to implement further ECPA actions on energy and climate change.
  - For example, the State University of New York at Albany operates the ECPA Andean Climate Change Inter-American Observatory Network (ACCION) in partnership with several universities and higher education centers in Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. This program builds the capacity of young scientists across the Americas to analyze and understand climate change-induced phenomena, and use their findings to raise awareness among policy makers.
  - The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) partnered with governments and the private sector to launch an ECPA Energy Innovation Center, which promotes energy innovation and knowledge exchange by serving as a regional incubator for implementation and financing. The Center offers technical assistance, executes capacity building programs and provides support for sustainable energy innovation.
  - Michigan State University and Universidad de Costa Rica partnered to implement an ECPA initiative to improve access to clean energy in rural Central America using on-site solar and bio-power generation. The initiative trains small producers on how to develop and deploy integrated, small-scale, self-sustained, waste-to-clean energy



generation systems that produce value-added by-products such as fertilizers, and curbs water pollution.

- Solar Energy International (SEI) is implementing the ECPA Solar Professionals' Academy of the Americas (SPAA) initiative. The Academy trained 50 people from Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Panama and Belize in the design, installation and maintenance of solar photovoltaic systems. These trainees acquired the technical skills needed to successfully launch and administer businesses in a critically important industry.
- The U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) implemented the Clean Energy Exchange Program of the Americas, bringing nearly 50 Latin American and Caribbean energy officials and project sponsors to the United States on a series of reverse trade missions. These missions fostered information exchanges on the commercial, technological, regulatory, and financial aspects associated with clean energy project development.
- “Yo Emprendedor” is developing entrepreneurial capacity in clean energy in Central America and the Caribbean. Entrepreneurs in the early stages of their businesses participate in free webinars where they are taught skills that will help them develop successful clean energy business plans.
- Higher Education for Development (HED) partnered with the University of the West Indies Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies to build additional permanent, local capacity in the area of climate adaptation in the Caribbean. The initiative focuses on research and policy and will expand research, outreach to policy makers, and develop short-courses for academic, public and private sector audiences. As a result of this effort, the University of the West Indies Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies will be internationally recognized as a Caribbean center of excellence in climate adaptation research and data collection.
- *What is striking about the examples that I mentioned is that all of these initiatives are being done through partnership and collaboration.*
- Energy and climate change challenges affect everyone. For example, a farmer needs to understand how warmer weather will affect crop yield or how to avoid environmental damage, whereas a scientist needs to understand the intricate physical and chemical aspects surrounding climate change and environmental degradation. A household needs to know how to reuse and recycle, whereas a city planner needs to know how to manage a landfill to curb land pollution and methane



emissions. An energy practitioner needs the technical skills to deploy new renewable energy technologies that generate clean electricity, whereas a consumer needs the behavioral skills to use electricity efficiently.

- *If the impact of climate change is universal, though differentiated, then the search for solutions must be shared. Whatever decision we make vis-à-vis climate change and energy, will have a profound impact on our lives and the lives of future generations.*
- Just yesterday in the Permanent Council, there was a discussion of the devastating impact of the Christmas-day flooding in several Caribbean countries. The Ambassador of St. Vincent and the Grenadines referenced climate change and noted that the Prime Minister of that country in the aftermath of the disaster has said that climate change is going to be a focus of that administration. That resonated in the room with several delegations speaking to the issue.
- The panel we have gathered this morning will share with us a number of best practices, experiences and lessons learnt on ways to convey the challenges of energy and climate change to different audiences and diverse stakeholders with varying needs and varying knowledge.
- Natural climate cycles have influenced humans for thousands of years. Today we know with extreme likelihood that the reverse is also true, and that our way of life also has a profound effect on climate. I believe that our conversations today will teach us ways to better carry out this message and advance greater energy and climate change awareness, education and literacy so that all people, women and men, young and old, can find their way to doing their part for a more sustainable world.
- Once again, I would like to welcome you to this forum and to the Organization of American States.