

**Plenary Session A:
Opening Ministerial Segment
Thursday, 3 June, 9.00 – 12.00 h
Venue: Plenary Hall IKBB**

Internationale Konferenz
für Erneuerbare Energien, Bonn
International Conference
for Renewable Energies, Bonn



SPEECH

José Antonio Ocampo

**United Nations Under-Secretary-General
for Economic and Social Affairs**

Ms. Wieczorek-Zeul, Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development,
Germany,

Mr. Trittin, Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety,
Germany,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

During the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in September 2002, his Excellency, Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder announced the hosting of the International Conference for Renewable Energies. Last December, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on renewable energy welcoming this initiative of the Federal Republic of Germany. I am indeed pleased to be able to witness and take part in this outstanding event now, which brings together so many ministers and senior officials, distinguished personalities, experts and other stakeholders for a truly global discussion on renewable energy. This large international attendance is a manifest to the generosity of the German host institutions and their commitment to the promotion of sustainable development. At the same time it is also a lively expression of the growing international awareness of the many benefits that are particular to renewable energy use.

At the United Nations, the intergovernmental dialogue on sustainable development has repeatedly emphasized the crucial importance of access to economically affordable, socially equitable and environmentally benign energy.

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Today, the greatest challenge undoubtedly comes from the fact that in the developing countries more than a quarter of mankind still faces a life devoid of modern energy services. In spite of considerable development efforts, progress is predicted to remain unacceptably slow. Some projections suggest that even in 2020 some 1.5 billion people will still not have electricity. Thus, if the United Nations Millennium Development Goals are to be achieved, investments in access to energy by the poorest sectors of the population will need to be significantly increased.

The environmental and health impacts associated with fossil fuel combustion also pose formidable challenges for the international community. The problems posed by indoor and outdoor air pollution, long-distance and trans-boundary transmission of pollutants and the growing threat of climate change must also be addressed urgently.

Access to natural resources and conventional energy supplies, in particular oil and gas resources, have always been important geopolitical considerations and frequently a cause for domestic or international controversies or even open conflict.

As global energy and electricity demand is projected to grow continuously over the next decades, unsustainable patterns of energy production and consumption will need to be phased out. Energy efficiency will need to improve and energy sources and energy carriers will need to be diversified if future energy markets are to be stabilized.

It is against this backdrop that we must consider the importance of renewable energy. At the *World Summit on Sustainable Development*, the participating heads of state and their representatives adopted the *Johannesburg Plan of Implementation*, including a consensus agreement to "... with a sense of urgency, substantially increase the global share of renewable energy sources...". The central issue before us now is how to achieve these objectives already agreed upon.

The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation explicitly recognizes the role of national and voluntary regional targets where they exist. The adoption of targets and timetables, even on a voluntary basis, can help significantly in monitoring progress and in measuring success

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at the local and national levels. Most notable is the European Union goal of achieving a 20 per cent share of the total energy mix from renewable sources by 2020. The significant achievements in wind energy by Denmark, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom, among others, demonstrate what can be done.

A number of developing countries have also been at the forefront of renewable energy implementation for decades. Among them, Brazil, China, Egypt, India and Morocco have major national programmes for renewable energy. Regional consensus building among developing countries has also been remarkable. As a part of their regional initiative for Sustainable Development Latin American and Caribbean countries have agreed that by the year 2010 the use of renewable energy by the region, taken as a whole, amounts to at least 10 per cent of total energy consumption.

Efforts to expand the energy supply from renewable sources face four mayor challenges:

The first is the *challenge of scale*. Currently available renewable energy technologies are making some contributions to energy supply, but the scale is still limited and, in most countries, marginal. Thus there is an urgent need to increase the scale of renewable energy use to a vastly higher level in a short period of time.

The second is the *challenge of adequate incentives*. It is essential that producers and consumers face relative prices that encourage a significant change in the patterns of energy supply and use. The cost of environmental impacts should be clearly incorporated into energy prices, and research and development of new renewable energy technologies should be subsidized by governments.

The third is the *challenge of technology diffusion*. Many developing countries face difficulties in diffusing currently available energy technologies and only some of the larger developing economies have been able to build their own manufacturing and research facilities. The full scope of the technology diffusion process covers information and knowledge exchange, adequate regulation, management capabilities, and mobilization of

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investments. South-South cooperation can offer many opportunities for capacity building and technology diffusion.

Finally, there is the *challenge of resources mobilization*. Massive funds will be needed for research and development in the area of renewable energy. Many developing countries also require financial assistance in particular for the expansion of energy supply in rural areas. Many of the existing sources of financial assistance, including the funds and programmes of the United Nations system, have only limited reach and capacity.

I personally look forward to the outcome of this Conference. Your recommendations will become a significant input to the work of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development. UN CSD is scheduled to focus its debate during the up-coming 2006-07 cycle on the thematic cluster of energy, transport, air pollution, climate change and industry. We look forward to concrete actions towards substantially increasing the global share of renewable energy. For our part, the United Nations agencies, programmes and entities are taking steps to work as a system on this and other energy issues. The newly established interagency task force of UN-Energy aims at implementing the JPoI recommendations on energy for sustainable development in a collaborative and coherent manner. The outcomes of this conference will give strong impetus to this effort.

An accelerated expansion of renewable energy use will certainly be a cornerstone along the path towards a global sustainable development future. I wish all of us best success in turning this vision into reality.