

Government of Panama Hosts Meeting of the Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas – ECPA

Representatives from over twenty countries of the Western Hemisphere met today and yesterday in Panama City to exchange views on key energy and climate issues confronting the region. The Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas (ECPA) meeting was convened by the Secretariat of Energy of Panama and the Organization of American States (OAS) to advance cooperation among the countries toward enhancing sustainable energy and addressing critical challenges of climate change.

In 2009, at the Fifth Summit of the Americas held in Trinidad and Tobago, United States President Barack Obama invited all nations of the Western Hemisphere to join in an Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas as a forum to strengthen Inter-American collaboration on energy and climate. ECPA presents a framework where all the governments across the Americas can collaborate on clean energy and climate change to achieve low carbon economic growth and development. It is a flexible mechanism through which governments may lead multi-country or bilateral initiatives to promote clean energy, advance energy security, fight energy poverty, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. ECPA initiatives can involve the private sector, civil society, academia, and international organizations.

Over the course of the two-day meeting, the countries shared experiences and lessons learned in the implementation of national and multinational projects and programs. Representatives made suggestions for new initiatives to further advance these priorities in the region. The Minister of Energy of Panama, Juan Manuel Urriola, noted “We must walk with the dynamic of the world. We cannot remain anchored. In this sense, we must walk with the pillars of ECPA (referring to the critical issues addressed by ECPA) which many of our countries share”. Secretary Urriola added that “ECPA shares ideas and policies with us, and helps us achieve them”.

The Minister of Commerce and Industry of Panama, Roberto Henriquez, who spoke at the opening ceremony, highlighted that “The Partnership is positioning energy and climate change among the most pressing issues by means of a multilateral coordination channel to achieve a future with clean energy resulting from the sharing of experiences, technologies and capital”.

As countries from the Americas share best practices in the development and use of sustainable energy solutions, and toward addressing challenges of climate change, the Organization of American States provides guidance in its capacity as the Partnership’s Clearinghouse. According to Mark Lambrides, from the Organization of American States, “This gathering generated widespread enthusiasm among participating countries, which took on leading roles in advancing the objectives and goals of ECPA on energy and climate”. Lambrides added that “As we advance toward the Summit of the Americas to be held in Cartagena, Colombia, we expect to see a growing number of countries engaged in new and existing ECPA initiatives”.

In April 2012, the Presidents of the Americas will meet in Cartagena de Indias for the Sixth Summit of the Americas. The energy and climate debate is expected to be one of the most important topics of the presidential dialogue. The dialogue initiated under ECPA will provide support to these discussions.

In addition to the successful conclusion of the ECPA meeting, Minister of Energy Juan Manuel Urriola noted “This event coincided with the approval of Panama’s law of incentives for the promotion of wind energy and the restructuring of the National Energy Secretariat”.