



Organización de los Estados Americanos
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RIO+20
United Nations Conference
on Sustainable Development

ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE GOVERNANCE: BUILDING PATHWAYS FOR SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

**OAS MAIN BUILDING
GUERRERO ROOM
17TH AND CONSTITUTION, NW, WASHINGTON, DC**

**Tuesday, February 28, 2012
3:00 to 5:00 pm**



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Background

Energy and climate change are at the front and center of the concerns of the countries of the Americas. Governments and civil society are becoming increasingly aware of the fact that energy paradigms need to be revisited to adequately address the challenge of supplying abundant, reliable energy while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Indeed, it can be argued that energy and climate change are two faces of the same coin.

With regard to climate change, the air and the oceans of the planet are getting warmer, polar icecaps are melting and sea levels are rising as a result of carbon dioxide emissions caused by fossil fuel combustion. According to a report released in 2010 by the UN Environment Programme, in Latin America and the Caribbean the number of people affected by extreme weather events such as storms, floods, high temperatures, forest fires and droughts grew from 5 million in the 1970s to more than 40 million between 2000 and 2009.¹ In the Caribbean, tidal increases are expected to exacerbate flooding, storm surge, erosion and other coastal hazards, thus threatening vital infrastructure, settlements and facilities that support livelihood. In Latin America, agricultural productivity, production stability and vital incomes are being lost to climate change.

On the energy front, volatile crude oil prices, a high dependence on imported fuels and the need to curb greenhouse gas emissions are significant challenges facing the region. Increasing global oil demand—particularly from Brazil, Russia, India and China—continuing political tensions in the Middle East, social unrest in major oil exporting countries and the rapid depletion of worldwide fossil fuel reserves are likely to drive energy costs upwards in the future. This scenario may have far-reaching consequences if innovative energy policies based on indigenous, renewable resources are not implemented.

In this context, the implementation of successful energy and climate strategies that benefit current and future generations is of the utmost importance. It entails tackling a myriad of social issues such as poverty, inequality, hunger and environmental degradation. These are all fundamental aspects of energy and climate that strike at the heart of the region's prosperity and demand the commitment of the people and their governments.

The Americas boast an extraordinary wealth in natural resources. The region accounts for the world's greatest repository of biological diversity, from which it derives an enormous capacity for hydropower generation. Additionally, significant solar, wind, geothermal, ocean and biomass energy are also spread across the region. Although these indigenous resources may be geographically exclusive to a certain area or country, they may be shared by several sister nations by means of interconnections. For example, geothermal electricity from Saint Kitts and Nevis could feed into the electric grid of other Caribbean islands such as Puerto Rico. Grid connected renewable energy plants could supply the Central American Electric Interconnection System (SIEPAC). A biofuel pipeline could serve several countries in South America. In other words, a combination of renewable energy expansion and regional-level energy integration could provide

¹ Vital Climate Change Graphics for Latin America and the Caribbean,, *Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean*. (2010) available http://www.grida.no/files/publications/LAC_Web_eng_2011-01-03.pdf (last visited February 8, 2012)



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Latin America and the Caribbean with abundant energy —the most fundamental tool for progress— while curbing greenhouse gas emissions.

The energy and climate change discourse involves multiple disciplines and the engagement of a growing number of stakeholders. From generators to consumers, policy and decision makers, regulators, environmentalists, academicians, scientists, engineers and end-users, all are affected, one way or another, by decisions made with regard to energy and climate. It is essential to increase collaboration among disciplines and stakeholders, and to drive the energy and climate debate towards tangible actions that yield viable solutions to pressing needs. The OAS is working with its Member States in achieving this purpose.

Context

The Organization of American States (OAS) through its Department of Sustainable Development (DSD) supports its member states in designing and implementing policies, strategies, programs and projects oriented around integrating environmental sustainability with poverty alleviation and economic development. This support translates sustainable development and environmental protection goals into concrete actions that have impact at the national level.

The Department also supports transparency and participation as practical ingredients of good governance, and is responsible for various tasks and initiatives in the area of environmental law and governance aimed at supporting countries in making fundamental decisions which engage all stakeholders, and encourage accountability and respect for sustainable development principles and institutions.

The Department has prepared a *Roadmap to Rio+20* and is playing a key role on the High Level International Advisory Committee for the World Congress on Justice, Governance and Law for Environmental Sustainability (World Congress), which is being co-sponsored by the OAS and will be held during the ‘sandwich days’ at Rio+20 in mid-June.

In addition to its support for the World Congress, the General Secretariat of the OAS is organizing a series of hemispheric dialogues in a variety of sustainable development themes, such as Energy and Climate Change, Integrated Water Resources Management, Biodiversity and Sustainable Land Management, Risk Management and Environmental Law, Policy and Governance. The results of these dialogues will feed into the Conference process through means such as policy papers and recommendations.

This fifth dialogue in the series will focus on institutional structures, policies, and procedures to facilitate sustainable energy. Participants will deliberate on ways to strengthen these institutions and will be called upon to outline recommendations on the implementation of basic governance principles and improving relationships among stakeholders.

Relevant Mandates

At the Declaration of Commitment of Port of Spain: *Securing Our Citizens’ Future by Promoting Human Prosperity, Energy Security and Environmental Sustainability*, Fifth Summit of the Americas, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, 2009 Paragraph 50, reaffirms the need to encourage the development of diverse renewable energy sources and technologies, to develop



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national strategies and to promote science-based development and use of increasingly advanced technologies for sustainable energy production. Paragraph 58: “We recognize the adverse impacts of climate change on all countries of the Hemisphere and reaffirm our commitment to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its objectives of achieving stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.

All OAS Member States invariably recognize that access to energy is of paramount importance to economic growth, development, and poverty alleviation. At the 37th General Assembly held in Panama City in June 2007, the Member States approved the Declaration of Panama: Energy for Sustainable Development [AG/DEC. 52 (XXXVII-O/07), 5 June 2007], in which they unequivocally recognize as an essential goal the need to generate and strengthen regional markets for the use of cleaner and renewable energy, and the exchange of information and experiences pertaining to sustainable energy by member states.

Article 15, Chapter III, Inter-American Democratic Charter reiterates how critical and essential that the states of the Hemisphere implement policies and strategies to protect the environment, including application of various treaties and conventions, to achieve sustainable development for the benefit of future generations.

The Inter-American Program for Sustainable Development (2006-2009) adopted by the OAS member states in 2006 contains a clause which reflects their commitment to support countries and sub-regional and regional institutions in their efforts to respond to the adverse effects of climate change, particularly sea-level rise, in coastal and marine areas through vulnerability assessments, adaptation planning, and capacity building. This support reflects OAS efforts to counter the effects of climate change in the socio-economic context.

Increased appreciation of climate change issues at the policy-making level – CPACC enabled more unification among regional parties and better articulation of regional positions for negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol.

Regional Progress toward Rio + 20

Consistent with this framework, countries throughout the Americas have been working with stakeholders at all levels to tackle issues of energy and climate change governance. Looking ahead to Rio+20, addressing these issues will be critical in achieving a well-rounded institutional framework for sustainable energy and climate change. Despite the good work detailed below, however, there remain numerous critical challenges that continue to limit the development of sustainable energy infrastructures throughout the States. Many of these critical challenges are associated with the increasing volatility of the energy markets along with growing concerns for the global climate.

Current issues of prominent interest include interconnection and cooperation measures among countries, fuel supply interconnections, and cooperation and harmonization of policies, regulations, norms and standards, energy security, including stability of fuel supplies, diversification of the energy mix, mitigation of the effects of fossil fuel price variation and uncertainty, and the linkages between energy security and poverty alleviation



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At the April 2009 Summit of the Americas in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, the leaders of the Americas underscored that energy and climate change are among the most important issues confronting our future, and they reaffirmed their commitment to work together toward a clean energy future. Responding to these shared challenges; President Obama invited all governments in the Western Hemisphere to join in an Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas (ECPA). Following President Obama's announcement, several countries of the hemisphere supported the establishment of a Clearinghouse for the coordination, outreach, and communication activities of the Partnership. The OAS/DSD was nominated to implement this Clearinghouse at the ECPA Meeting of High Level Authorities, held in Lima, Peru. Through the Clearinghouse, the GS/OAS supports efforts to achieve the goals of ECPA for the advancement of energy sustainability and low carbon economic growth by fostering dialogue among the governments of the Americas around the seven pillars of ECPA, namely energy efficiency, renewable energy, cleaner and more efficient use of fossil fuels, energy infrastructure, energy poverty, sustainable forests and land-use and adaptation...

One relevant OAS-DSD initiative is the Renewable Energy in the Americas Initiative (REIA), created from 1999 to 2008, as its "umbrella" energy program and in late 2007 the program was re-launched as the Sustainable Energy Partnership of the Americas (SEPA). Together these programs were designed to promote the expanded development and use of renewable energy systems in the Americas through public awareness, capacity building and institutional strengthening, project feasibility and natural resource surveys and policy and regulatory reform.

The path to addressing the myriad of aspects pertaining to good energy and climate governance remains an enormous challenge requiring a lucid understanding of all existing international and national instruments and mechanisms available to foment progress. In this light, Dialogue discussions will aim to address key issues of the legal and policy frameworks required to advance conservation and sustainable use of energy nationally and regionally.

The following challenges will be particularly addressed during the discussion:

- The capacity to design, develop, execute and improve policies, laws, regulations that are based on the premise of energy sustainability and climate change mitigation;
- Access to readily available information on energy;
- Energy integration and inter-connection strategies among States resulting in better energy security, reducing fossil fuel dependency, and curbing carbon emissions;
- Regional energy partnerships to facilitate the harmonization of programs, policies and standards to increase the competitiveness of markets for clean energy throughout the hemisphere;
- Adaptation planning and capacity building in the energy sector in response to the adverse effects of climate change and;
- Strengthening institutional frameworks to support energy sustainability and climate change mitigation.



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ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE GOVERNANCE: BUILDING PATHWAYS FOR SUSTAINABLE ENERGY PRELIMINARY PROGRAM

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- 3:00 – 3:15 pm Welcome remarks, *Ambassador Jacinth Lorna Henry-Martin, Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis*
- 3:15 – 4:30 pm **Davos-Style Panel Discussion²: Energy and Climate Change Governance: Building pathways for sustainable energy**
- Chair: Mark Lambrides, Chief, Energy and Climate Change Mitigation, Department of Sustainable Development, OAS*
- Panelists:*
- 1) *Robert Ichord (Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Energy Resources, U.S. Department of State)*
 - 2) *Reid Detchon (Vice President for Energy and Climate, United Nations Foundation)*
 - 3) *Claudio Alatorre (Senior Climate Change Specialist, Climate Change and Sustainability, The Inter-American Development Bank)*
- 4:30 – 5:00 pm Open discussion and recommendations
- 5:00 pm Closing, *Cletus Springer, Director, Department of Sustainable Development, OAS*

*To be confirmed

² The 'Davos-style' panel discussion will emphasize discussion and interaction among the experts on Governance, Public Participation, and Gender Mainstreaming in Sustainable Development Decision-Making. After opening remarks and introduction of the panelists, the Moderator will pose questions and facilitate a discussion. The Moderator will provide a brief summary of comments and thoughts at the end of the discussion.