

18 June 2009

**Statement of Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann,  
President of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly,  
to the Interactive Thematic Dialogue on Energy Efficiency, Energy  
Conservation and New and Renewable Sources of Energy**

Excellencies,  
Mr. Secretary-General,  
Professor Lee Hoe-sung,  
Dear Friends,

I am very pleased to open this thematic dialogue of the General Assembly on energy efficiency, energy conservation and new and renewable sources of energy. Today's discussion will bring to our Membership not only a diversity of views, but also of disciplines and knowledge. It is appropriate that the General Assembly avail itself of the growing expertise on these issues. The challenges we are examining today are not separate from the converging crises that are confronting us as an international community: climate change, the financial and economic crisis, and the food crisis, among others. Rather, these crises converge, interact, fuel and aggravate each other.

Energy, of course, is necessary for our daily survival. But it is also the keystone to all economic development. Our future development and survival as a healthy species depend on the long-term availability of energy from sources that are dependable, safe and environmentally sound.

Today, however, we have no single source of energy or mix of sources of energy to meet these needs. We are clearly on an unsustainable energy path.

Climate change is now threatening humanity and placed Mother Earth in peril because we, especially those of us in the North, have based our economies on the reckless, inefficient and polluting consumption of fossil fuels.

This awareness has finally taken hold. People everywhere – from scientists, politicians and everyday citizens – are pressing for fundamental changes in the ways we use energy and where it comes from. Clearly, the time for renewable sources of energy has arrived and, as the rapid increase in production during this decade indicates, the prospects for renewable energy have never looked better, even in the face of recession.

While the industrialized North is using far too much energy, most people of the world do not have access to sufficient energy. Many live in countries where economic growth is essential to lift them out of poverty. How do we deal with inequitable energy patterns and safeguard the right to development at the same time?

The facts are stark. Unless we undertake fundamental changes, world consumption of energy is expected to grow by around 40 per cent by the year 2030. Experts argue that we need a technology revolution that will enable us to reconcile our development and growing energy needs with steps to mitigate climate change and the general carrying capacity of the earth.

How can we do this?

I have called for this thematic debate at the specific request of a diverse group of 18 concerned Member States. I regret that the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, His Excellency Sergei Martynov, is unable to join us here today as planned, as he was one of the initial advocates for this meeting. We hope to provide the opportunity all Member States to review the options at hand and to discuss the policy changes required to change our course. Our dialogue is made that much more urgent due to the economic crisis, which reduces economic activity all around the world.

We all hope, especially for the sake of the more vulnerable among us, that we will recover from this downturn before too long. It would be an enormous step forward if this recovery were coupled with visionary policies, innovative technologies and broad incentives for new and renewable sources of energy.

We have entered a period of price fluctuations, uncertainty and instability regarding energy production and pricing. Unfortunately, lower energy prices tend to negatively affect decision-making regarding investment in new and renewable sources of energy.

What can policy-makers do to reverse this trend?

While economic incentive packages for growth can counter these negative trends to some extent, it is hard to see that they can reverse it given the magnitude of the problem and the scarce funds for counter-cyclical measures in most countries.

Today, we are locked in by our technology base. While technology is constantly being developed, there is a need for incentives to accelerate the process. States and the public sector must support the goals of renewable energy. And, by providing appropriate incentives, the private sector can also be mobilized in a concerted fashion.

In setting policies, it is important that we are aware of the different costs involved in developing new and renewable sources of energy. Each source of renewable energy, particularly solar, wind and hydro power, have distinct advantages and few drawbacks, the most important of which is the cost of initial research and development.

Public funds for investment and official development assistance are key but insufficient. We must continue to fund these technologies and rest assured that the initial higher costs will be offset by availability of inexhaustible and pollution-free energy.

I encourage you to study how financial flows can be directed towards development of renewable energy production in developing countries by means of incentives such as the clean development mechanism under the Kyoto protocol.

When the world gathers in Copenhagen in December for the Conference of the Parties of the Climate Change Convention, I hope we will be presented with a whole new generation of financial incentives, based on the Kyoto mechanisms, that will connect the financial flows of the carbon markets of developed countries to the development of new projects in developing countries.

We increasingly recognize that common but differentiated responsibilities and collective efforts are needed everywhere in the world to make the transition to a low carbon economy. We need the commitment and leadership of major carbon-emitting countries to demonstrate the way forward. In this regard, I applaud the bold new vision for a clean energy future being articulated by the administration in Washington.

But we are all responsible for achieving a successful agreement in Copenhagen. I trust that the debate you are undertaking today in the General Assembly will contribute substantively to developing a new paradigm for alternative energy production and conservation that ensure our economic and environmental sustainability and well being.

Thank you.