

THE INAUGURAL AGORA TRANSFORMING THE WORLD THROUGH SUSTAINABLE ENERGY FOR ALL: LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND: 6 JUNE 2016

The Inaugural Agora on ‘Transforming the World through Sustainable Energy for All: Leaving No One Behind’ took place on 6 June 2016 at UN Headquarters in New York, USA, in parallel with the first annual Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation (STI Forum) for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Organized by the Royal Academy of Science International Trust (RASIT) and Eko Renewable Energy (EkoRE) in collaboration with the Permanent Mission of Honduras, the Agora was organized around two interactive panels that included representatives from UN Member States, the UN, the private sector, academia, scientists, entrepreneurs and local communities.

Participants discussed actions and initiatives to respond to current and emerging challenges of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with an emphasis on sustainable energy and energy systems as a platform for global change. They also considered the importance of partnerships to scale up energy efficiency and the deployment of renewable energy.

The meeting’s discussions are intended to contribute to the STI Forum and to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).

REPORT OF THE MEETING

OPENING OF THE AGORA

On Monday afternoon, 6 June, Her Royal Highness Princess Dr. Nisreen El-Hashemite, Executive Director of the Royal Academy of Science International Trust (RASIT), opened the meeting, explaining that the Agora seeks to enhance partnerships and is action



Her Royal Highness Princess Nisreen El-Hashemite, Executive Director, RASIT



Panel (L-R): Talya Ozdemir, Student at Aci Schools, Istanbul, Turkey, representing a world children’s vision; Associate Director for Natural Resources, Energy and Science - The White House, US; Hector Alejandro Palma Cerna, Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Honduras; Her Royal Highness Princess Nisreen El-Hashemite, Executive Director, RASIT; Serhan Suzer, CEO, EkoRE, Turkey; and Isaiah Chabala, former Ambassador of Zambia to the UN Offices in Geneva.

oriented. She stressed that in order to achieve the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda, there is a need to adopt a “we” instead of an “I” mentality.

Hector Alejandro Palma Cerna, Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Honduras, emphasized the crucial role of partnerships with civil society, academia and other actors. He noted that his country is committed to the issue of renewable energy, outlining the need to take responsibility for future generations.



Hector Alejandro Palma Cerna, Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Honduras

INTERACTIVE PANEL 1

Moderating the panel, Isaiah Chabala, former Ambassador of Zambia to the UN Offices in Geneva, asked participants to observe a minute of silence for the passing of Muhammad Ali, remarking that he stood up for peace and inequality.

IN THIS ISSUE

Report of the Meeting	1
Opening of the Agora	2
Interactive Panel 1	2
Interactive Panel 2	3
Closing of the Agora	3





Ali Zaidi Associate Director for Natural Resources, Energy and Science - The White House, US

Ali Zaidi, Associate Director for Natural Resources, Energy and Science, the White House, reported that 1.1 billion people on the planet live without access to electricity, and that US\$329 billion was invested in clean energy globally in 2015. Noting a “sense of anxiety” from the scientific community about the state of the planet, he highlighted the urgency to act, and the

importance of research and development.

Talya Ozdemir, a 10-year-old student at Aci Schools, Istanbul, Turkey, representing a world children’s vision, called for increasing the voice of children in decision-making processes. She added that renewable energies are safe, clean and “owned by everyone,” and underscored that electricity access is needed for education and for providing children with better opportunities.



Talya Ozdemir, Student at Aci Schools, Istanbul, Turkey, representing a world children’s vision

Per Thöresson, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Sweden, said his country wants to become the first fossil-free welfare State in the world, and reported that following the introduction of a carbon tax in the country, greenhouse gas emissions decreased by almost a third and the Swedish economy continued



Per Thöresson, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Sweden

to grow. He added that his country is a contributor to the UN Secretary-General’s Sustainable Energy for All initiative, and is recycling more than 99% of its household waste.

Serhan Suzer, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), EkoRE, suggested that to fight climate change, all countries should aim for: 100% renewable energy; energy efficiency; sustainable city planning and housing; technological enhancement; research and development; and education on sustainability and technology. He said different



Serhan Suzer, CEO, EkoRE, Turkey

types of technologies are now available for solar, wind and bioenergy, and that solar energy has the potential to “power the entire world.”

Munawar Hussain, Chanel, representing the fashion industry, remarked that the lack of electricity in some textile-producing countries is problematic in terms of cost and efficiency. He stressed the importance of renewable energy as a solution to this issue.

Chantal Line Carpentier, Chief, UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), New York Office, said developing countries cannot develop quickly if they do not have access to clean and affordable energy. She noted further that one-quarter of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions is found in the goods and services traded globally.

Olav Kjørven, Director of the Public Partnership Division, UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), via video link, said achieving the 2030 Agenda is “all about partnerships.” He stressed the need to work in a more integrated way, by bringing together sectors, solutions across sectors, and different communities, including policy makers, businesses, and scientists.

Nikhil Seth, Executive Director, UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), via video link, called for: improving the environmental performance of the energy sector; new partnerships for sustainable energy for all; and business engagement for implementation of the 2030 Agenda. He noted that UNITAR aims to support SDG 7 (Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all) in the coming years.

Mariko Matsunaga, Professor, Chuo University, Japan, via video link, described her research on next generation energy and healthcare technologies for the SDGs, and called for implementing the 2030 Agenda.



Chantal Line Carpentier, Chief, UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), New York Office



View of the room during the Inaugural Agora

Ben Kallos, New York City Council Member, remarked that part of the US population still does not believe in climate change. He provided examples of actions taken in New York City in terms of renewable energy and reducing energy use, including the use of geothermal energy in some buildings, and working with children to “green” building rooftops. He also noted a political interest to increase wind energy in New York City.

In the ensuing discussion, participants called for creating national budgets to support infrastructure for renewable energy, and for using different types of renewable energies to satisfy population needs and smooth out power generation.

Curt Meltzer, Felician University, and discussant for the session, said energy is at the heart of the world’s problems in terms of, *inter alia*, food and poverty, and suggested that more than one day a year should be dedicated to a meeting like the Agora, that brings together people from different horizons.

INTERACTIVE PANEL 2

This panel was moderated by Isaiah Chabala.



Isaiah Chabala, former Ambassador of Zambia to the UN Offices in Geneva

Jake Saper, Senior Associate, Emergence Capital, shared lessons learnt from public-private partnerships in the energy sector, saying: there is a need for clear and stable policies; partnerships between international developers and local businesses can be very effective; and technology has a critical role in combatting climate change but is under exploited. He called on decision-makers

to work with entrepreneurs, and provided examples of existing technologies, such as Comfy, a mobile app that gives personalized control of comfort utilities in the workplace.

Bianca Cassouto, M.A. candidate, Patel College of Global Sustainability, University of South Florida, said the tourism industry needs to better understand sustainability issues, and noted the importance of taking account of the SDGs in that industry.

Cheng-hao Shih, Ph.D. Candidate, Center for Energy and Environmental Policy, University of Delaware, said cross-



Cheng-hao Shih, Ph.D. Candidate, Center for Energy and Environmental Policy, University of Delaware

sectoral collaborations in the energy sector are needed, and noted that the US is composed of independent agencies at the state level that have a role of coordinating across sectors.

Richard Berman, Director, Patel College of Global Sustainability, University of South Florida, via video link, introduced some of the College’s work, including on eco-cities and sea turtle conservation.

Ed Chiles, CEO of The Chiles Group of Restaurants, via video link, and David Randle, Professor of Sustainable Tourism, Patel College of Global Sustainability, University of South Florida, presented the case of the Anna Maria Island in Florida, which has, among other things, a “smart energy district,” energy efficient buildings and the Edible Community Garden concept. They noted that the Chiles Group of Restaurants on the island has developed a model promoting sustainable agriculture, and incentives for sustainable fishing in partnership with the historic Cortez fishing village.

Takeshi Utsumi, Vice-President for Technology and Coordination, Global University System, stressed the need for qualitative and quantitative skills for rational decision-making, and discussed the relevance of integrated simulation models that include components such as energy, society, the economy and the environment.



Clayton Banks, Silicon Harlem

Kristin Hoffmann, New York City singer and songwriter, asked about carbon footprint, particularly about the links between family size and energy, and Clayton Banks, Silicon Harlem, asked how to get more sustainable development investments in the “inner city.”

At the end of the session, Leyla Vural, storyteller, LV Communications, read a poem from the 13th-century Persian poet Rumi on the importance of listening.

CLOSING OF THE AGORA

During the closing segment, Her Royal Highness Princess Dr. Nisreen El-Hashemite thanked participants for the discussions, and for making the Inaugural Agora a great success. She highlighted the importance of the event for SDG 17 on strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development, noting that goal 17 is necessary in order to meet the other SDGs. She brought the meeting to a close at 6.20pm.



Richard Jordan, RASIT Operation at the UN and Leyla Vural, storyteller, LV Communications