

A Special Report on Selected Side Events at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD or Rio+20)

Published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)
in cooperation with the World Bank, the IFC and the EC



Online at <http://www.iisd.ca/uncsd/rio20/enbots/>

Issue #9 | UNCSD or Rio+20 | 13-22 June 2012 | Rio de Janeiro, Brazil | Friday, 22 June 2012

Events convened on Thursday, 21 June 2012

The Power of Local Action: Honoring communities in the frontlines of sustainable development

Organized by the UNDP



Admiring the passion of communities, Edward Norton, UN Goodwill Ambassador for Biodiversity, said “there is no excuse for apathy.”

This event showcased and honored the winners of the Equator Prize 2012. The Equator Initiative is a partnership that brings together the UN, governments, civil society, business and grassroots organizations to recognize and advance local sustainable development solutions for people, nature and resilient communities.

Camila Pitanga, Brazilian actress and environmental advocate, applauded the achievements of the winners who she said are showing the leadership needed for safeguarding the earth’s resources, stressing that they should be at the center of the discussion on how to improve environmental governance.

Edward Norton, UN Goodwill Ambassador for Biodiversity, stressed the need for humanity to adapt to and address the challenge of sustainable livelihoods. He urged national leaders to take inspiration from the communities honored by the Equator Initiative and reward their courage and vision with concrete, life-changing decisions.

Helen Clark, Administrator, UNDP, reflecting on UNDP’s support for addressing global challenges and empowering local people, reminded that the evening’s event was about celebrating the people who do not wait for governments to act, but take individual action.

Vicky Tauli-Corpuz, Executive Director, Tebtebba Foundation, and Richard Branson, Founder, Virgin Group, announced the 25 winners of the Equator Prize 2012, with Branson saying that governments cannot solve the problems alone. Branson also stressed his organization’s aim to put people at the center of sustainability.

Announcing the winners in the thematic awards category, Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary, UNFCCC, applauded communities on the ground for claiming their responsibility and addressing the global issue of sustainable environmental governance.

Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, Executive Secretary, CBD, emphasized the importance of preserving traditional knowledge, with regard to biodiversity conversation.

Achim Steiner, Executive Secretary, UNEP, emphasizing the transformation often wrought by small contributions, recalled the many individuals who remain unrecognized, including those who end up in jail or lose their lives for protecting the environment.

Announcing the thematic prize for women’s empowerment in honor of Marie Aminata Khan, Clark stressed that development without women’s empowerment is not sustainable.

The evening’s event was concluded with a musical performance by Gilberto Gil, renowned musician and former Brazilian Minister of Culture.

More information:
<http://www.undp.org/>

Contact:
Equator Initiative
<info@equatorinitiative.org>

Sustainable, Inclusive Growth: the way forward from Rio+20 and G20

Organized by the Government of Denmark, the Global Green Growth Institute

The session addressed the challenge of accelerating and scaling up green and inclusive growth, and explored how platforms such as the 3GF can contribute to spur action and to scale-up and intensify business contributions in the transition to a green economy.

Chairing the event, Helle Thorning-Schmidt, Prime Minister of Denmark, stressed the importance of public-private partnerships (PPPs) such as the 3GF, warning that PPPs are not in themselves a solution for green growth.

Juan Elvira Quesada, Mexico's Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, underlined the importance of using the 3GF as a unique platform for businesses and governments to find the best solutions for the transition to a green economy.

The ensuing panel discussion was moderated by Angel Gurría, Secretary General, OECD.

On the Rio+20 outcome document, Helle Thorning-Schmidt, Prime Minister of Denmark, said that Denmark is "moderately satisfied" with the result, because it reflects the wide support gathered by the concept of a green economy and contains agreement on a process towards formulating SDGs.

Kandeh Yumkella, Director-General, UNIDO, highlighted the need for finance and technology from the private sector and said an industrial transformation is necessary to achieve sustainable growth and equal levels of prosperity throughout the world.

On the Rio+20 outcome, Paul Polman, CEO, Unilever, lamented the lack of clear targets, funding, commitments and ways forward, emphasizing the importance that the business community assigns to transparency as a basis for trust and a vehicle for prosperity.

Luciano Coutinho, President, BNDES, said the challenges for achieving sustainable development can be addressed through defining clear objectives and establishing sustainable standards for consumption and production.

Lee Myung-Bak, President of the Republic of Korea, emphasized the importance of closely linking strategy, technology and funding to create a "green growth triangle".

In his closing remarks, Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General, stressed the vital importance of green growth, highlighting that it not only provides hope and confidence for a better future, but represents jobs, innovation, cleaner air and more liveable cities.



Helle Thorning-Schmidt, Prime Minister of Denmark, said that the 3GF aims at following up on the Rio+20 work and decisions and turn them into actions and deeds.



Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General, emphasized the centrality of universal access to electricity, and called upon world leaders to take active action to eliminate social inequity.

More information:

<http://www.globalgreengrowthforum.com/>

Contact:

Hee Kyung Son <h.son@gggi.org>



L-R: Paul Polman, CEO, Unilever; Kandeh Yumkella, Director-General, UNIDO; Helle Thorning-Schmidt, Prime Minister of Denmark; Luciano Coutinho, President, BNDES; and Angel Gurría, Secretary General, OECD.

Shifting Sustainability Horizons: Making or painting the economy green

Organized by Green Cross International (GCI), the Club of Rome and Earth Charter International (ECI)

This event discussed the components of a green economy and the underlying causes of environmental degradation.

During his introductory remarks by video, GCI Founding President Mikhail Gorbachev expressed optimism for Rio+20 to serve as a launching pad for practical initiatives. International youth representatives from GCI presented a vision for their green future, which emphasized citizen solutions and the right to a clean and healthy environment.

Setting a framework for discussion, Adam Koniuszewski, GCI, asked if a green economy is the means to a sustainable future, or business as usual.

Alexander Likhotel, President, GCI, affirmed the need to shift fundamentally production and consumption patterns onto a more sustainable path, and lamented that the Rio+20 outcome document contains “zero substance” for meaningful commitments.

Kartikeya Sarabhai, Director, Centre for Environment Education, discussed the role of business in a green economy. He expressed support for business engagement through effective case studies in a green economy. He also emphasized the diversity of livelihoods and solutions in a green economy, and cautioned against a “one size fits all” approach.

Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker, International Resource Panel, addressed the many benefits of a green economy, such as the benefits from eradicating poverty and overcoming resource conflicts.

Marisa Arienza, President, Green Cross Argentina, said a green economy is viable if it involves learning from the failures of the past and prioritize poverty eradication.

Mirian Vilela, Executive Director, ECI, explained the benefits of a green economy agenda because of its coherent language for finance and economy ministers. She elaborated on common principles that should frame the green economy discourse and urged companies and nations to act on them.

Ashok Khosla, President, IUCN, cautioned political and corporate leaders against solutions limited to technology. He spoke on empowering people, especially women, to enable them to choose family sizes to the betterment of communities and the global population.

In the ensuing discussion, participants discussed *inter alia*: the relationship of population growth to the green economy; the engagement of young people; the strength of democracy in the UN; and job creation in a green economy.



Mirian Vilela, Executive Director, Earth Charter Initiative, highlighted common principles for the green economy that are based on existing international agreements and proposals.



Adam Koniuszewski, GCI, considered the growing attention towards the topic of a green economy.

More information:

<http://www.gci.ch/>

Contacts:

Paul Garwood <Paul.garwood@gci.ch>



L-R: Mirian Vilela, Executive Director, Earth Charter Initiative; Kartikeya Sarabhai, Director, Centre for Environment; Marisa Arienza, Green Cross Argentina; Alexander Likhotel, President, GCI; Adam Koniuszewski, GCI; Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker, International Resource Panel; and Ashok Khosla, President of IUCN

Resilient People, Resilient Planet: A Future Worth Choosing

Organized by the GSP

During this side event, moderated by Janos Pasztor, Executive Secretary, GSP, members of the GSP discussed key messages and recommendations from the GSP report "Resilient People, Resilient Planet: A Future Worth Choosing."

Tarja Halonen, former President of Finland, GSP Co-Chair, offered its 56 recommendations as tools for implementing sustainable development in decision-making.

Hajiya Amina Az-Zubair, former Senior Special Assistant and Adviser to the President of Nigeria on the MDGs, highlighted the contributions of the Panel in the context of the MDGs, noting Nigeria's efforts to remove fossil fuel subsidies in a way that is not detrimental to its population.

James Balsillie, Chair of the Board, Centre for International Governance Innovation, reflected on the transformative potential of new paradigms of progress and the power of human beings engaged together in creative pursuit.

Ali Babacan, Turkish Deputy Prime Minister, said the overemphasis on GDP should be replaced with measures that capture social and environmental performance.

Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Prime Minister of Norway, Chair, World Commission on Environment and Development, noted the report contained recommendations that are more substantive than the Rio+20 outcome document.

Jacob Zuma, President of South Africa, GSP Co-Chair, underscored the need to eradicate poverty and reduce inequality.

Freundel Stuart, Prime Minister of Barbados, stressed that global sustainability cannot be achieved without a blue economy for healthy and productive oceans.

Richard Branson, Founder, Virgin Group, reiterated the need to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies, and highlighted the potential for biofuels to meet transportation energy needs.

Micheline Calmy-Rey, former President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, said the report demonstrates the potential for existing technology, knowledge and financial means to tackle sustainability challenges.

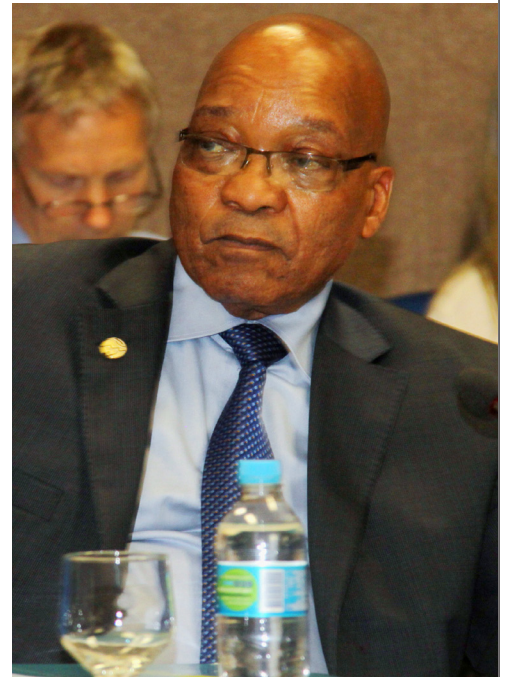
Gunilla Carlsson, Swedish Minister for International Development Cooperation, urged the importance of holding governance accountable to youth.

Connie Hedegaard, European Commissioner for Climate Action, stated that fossil fuel subsidies will be eliminated in Europe by 2018.

Caroline Spelman, UK's Secretary of State, Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, emphasized the report's integrated solutions to problems at the food, water and energy nexus.

Irina Bokova, Director-General, UNESCO, endorsed the proposal for a scientific advisory council of the UN Secretary-General, and the launch of a global initiative to strengthen the science-policy interface.

Yolanda Kakabadse, President, WWF, said she was disappointed that the Rio+20 outcome document fails to adopt the recommendations of the report, but remained encouraged that the report is the highest policy statement yet delivered on practical steps for a prosperous future.



Jacob Zuma, President of South Africa, GSP Co-Chair, recalled the necessity for Rio+20 to advance the implementation of commitments made at the World Summit on Sustainable Development ten years ago in Johannesburg.



Gro Harlem Brundtland, Former Prime Minister of Norway, Chair, World Commission on Environment and Development, said she was encouraged by the elevation of women in Rio+20 over UNCED but was disappointed by the removal of women's reproductive rights from the text.

More information:

<http://www.un.org/gsp/>

Contact:

GSP Secretariat <gsp-secretariat@un.org>

Breaking Down Political Barriers to Fossil Fuel Subsidy Reform

Organized by IISD, UNEP and the Governments of Switzerland and New Zealand

During this side event stakeholders discussed the political barriers to fossil fuel subsidy reform and how to overcome these, as well as concerns about negative effects on the competitiveness of domestic energy intensive industries.

Mark Halle, IISD, said that the current economic failure is indicative of the sustainable development crisis, emphasized that the overwhelming majority of subsidies have a deleterious effect on sustainable development, and underscored that most subsidies benefit the middle class, negating the original intent of alleviating poverty.

Martin Lidegaard, Danish Minister for Climate, Energy and Building, described the two-fold nature of the current global crisis, whereby solving the economic crisis should not worsen the climate change crisis. He emphasized the need to strengthen the focus on subsidy reform and urged forming complementary policies.

Kerryn Lang, IISD, attributed much of the failure in several countries of reforming fossil fuel subsidies to lack of transparency from governments, and urged redirecting subsidies to the renewable energy sector, job creation, or improved transit systems. She called for well-informed plans and clear communication strategies, and suggested phasing in the process of reform starting with the most harmful subsidies.

Fabby Tumiwa, Institute for Essential Services, Indonesia, suggested strategies prior to implementation of subsidy reforms: clear, transparent governmental strategies; measures against corruption and resource management failure; public awareness-raising; and political reform.

On reasons for the difficulty of transforming harmful subsidies, Peter Lehner, Executive Director, National Resources Defence Council (NRDC), cited the political power of the fossil fuel industry and the monopoly of the oil companies in transport systems. Lehner suggested ways to reduce dependence on fossil fuels including alternative fuels, electric vehicles and mass transit.

Hans-Peter Egler, State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, Switzerland, blaming complex interlinkages between the budgetary, health, and transport sectors for the complications in subsidy reform, applauded the current international consensus about the need for global reform. Egler emphasized the need for analyses, targeted approaches, and stakeholder involvement to which transparency is critical.

In the ensuing discussion, Lidegaard said there is no “one-size-fits-all” solution, and suggested systematically combining energy efficiency strategies with phasing out subsidies. Participants commented on: lack of transparency of fuel increases; alternatives to subsidy elimination; incentive schemes to induce energy efficient behaviour; and timing of introducing subsidy reforms.



Mark Halle, Director, IISD, called for screening processes prior to introduction of new subsidies.



Martin Lidegaard, Denmark’s Minister for Climate, Energy and Building, lamented subsidies’ failure to benefit the poor as intended.

More information:
<http://www.iisd.org/gsi/>

Contact:
 Kerryn Lang <klang@iisd.org>



Participants during the side event.

Global Partnership for Oceans: Coming together for healthy and productive oceans

Organized by the Governments of Monaco and Kiribati, and the World Bank

This side event showcased the recently announced Global Partnership for Oceans.

Rachel Kyte, World Bank, underscored the strength of committed partnerships in finding new ways to leverage support for protecting oceans.

Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General, urged a new model of global ocean governance, and pledged to help protect oceans from human-induced impacts that threaten communities' livelihoods.

HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco, lauded the strong focus on oceans in the Rio+20 outcome document and lamented harvesting decisions that deleteriously affect fish stocks.

Anote Tong, President of Kiribati, describing the plight of his country in adapting to rising sea levels, called for integrated ocean management based on partnerships.

Lisel Alamilla, Belize's Minister of Forestry, Fisheries, and Sustainable Development, spoke of her country's pilot community projects in improved marine management that inform the development of scaleable medium and long-term plans.

Amy Adams, New Zealand's Minister for the Environment, said her government does not regard concerns for the marine environment as constraints, but rather aims to harness the economic potential of the oceans.

Florence Chenoweth, Liberian Minister of Agriculture, urged strengthening laws to address illegal fishing activities, and investment in monitoring systems and partnerships along coastlines to improve marine governance.

Ida Auken, Danish Minister of Environment, said the EU proposed concrete timeframes to protect and restore the oceans.

Heikki Holmås, Norwegian Minister of International Development, warned that although the seas act as a litter bin, they are also the earth's most unexplored resource, and commended the strong text in the Rio+20 outcome document on illegal fishing.

Park Kwang-youl, Republic of Korea's Director General for Marine Environment Policy, called for strengthening management measures including monitoring of fish stocks, environmental impact assessments and proper fishing methods.

Roger Bing, Vice President for Seafood Purchasing, Darden, called for improved data collection and monitoring systems, and emphasized his company's policy against serving at-risk species in restaurants.

Jose Graziano da Silva, Director General, FAO, spoke of international guidelines and a global environmental fund to inform governance of the high seas.

Julia Marton-Lefèvre, Director General, IUCN, called for reducing marine pollution and acidification, and increasing marine protected areas to above 10% of the oceans.

James Leape, Director, WWF, stressed that often the only way to succeed is through partnerships, often with unexpected partners, and urged global collaborations.



HRH Prince Albert II of Monaco, said the three pillars of sustainable development should translate into opportunities for marine communities.



Anote Tong, President of the Republic of Kiribati, emphasized effectiveness of initiatives can only be enhanced through collective action.

More information:

<http://www.globalpartnershipsforoceans.org/>

Contact:

Robert Bisset <rbisset@worldbank.org>

Inclusive Green Growth: Challenges and opportunities on the pathway to sustainable development

Organized by the World Bank

This high-level discussion considered the key challenges and opportunities in pursuing green and inclusive growth.

In his welcoming remarks, Mahmoud Mohieldin, Managing Director, World Bank, underscored the importance of inclusive growth for operationalizing sustainable development. To realize green growth, he described the importance of, *inter alia*, policy coordination and the reduction of inefficient subsidies.

Sherry Ayithey, Ghanaian Minister of Environment, described her vision for green growth as one that is inclusive and takes a bottom-up approach. While highlighting domestic policies, she described how her country is looking into the role of youth and women for managing natural resources as a means toward sustainability.

René Castro Salazar, Costa Rican Minister of Environment, outlined national policies intended to preserve and strengthen natural capital through investments in, *inter alia*, eco-tourism and renewable energy. Through a comprehensive set of national actions, he explained how 25% of the territory is under special protection schemes and 90% of electricity is achieved through renewable means. He stated that these measures have helped, instead of hindered, the national welfare and economy.

Min Zhu, Deputy Managing Director, International Monetary Fund (IMF), highlighted the room for policies and fiscal instruments to promote green growth and inclusiveness. Among other measures, he encouraged the reduction of subsidies to oil and gas, highlighting that US\$ 409 billion was spent on fossil fuel consumption subsidies in 2010, and welcomed the introduction of a carbon tax in Australia.

Park Seung Hwan, Chairman, Korea Environment Corporation, described the Republic of Korea's paradigm of green growth as "action oriented." Park described the research and development investments made by his country to address climate change issues, and highlighted a national GHG emissions reduction target of 30% below business as usual by 2020.

Christian Friis Bach, Danish Minister for Development Cooperation, described green growth as a solution to many challenges because of its relationships to energy efficiency, water management, sustainable agriculture, food waste, urban planning, and consumption patterns. He also remarked on the need to correct market failures and reduce harmful subsidies.

Ma Zhongyu, Deputy Secretary-General, Government of Ningxia Autonomous Region, China, discussed limits on the human carrying capacity that have led to poverty problems and land degradation. He elaborated on the government's attention to capacity building and education towards adaptation to climate change.

In the ensuing discussion, participants addressed, *inter alia*, coastal and marine issues regarding green growth and standards from the private sector domestically and abroad.



Sherry Ayithey, Minister of Environment, Ghana, shared a vision for green growth that is inclusive and has a "bottom-up" approach.



René Castro Salazar, Minister of Environment, Costa Rica, described positive actions taken by Costa Rica to contribute to natural capital to increase GDP by adding environmental goods.

More information:
<http://www.worldbank.org/>

Contact:
<http://www.worldbank.org/>



L-R: Sherry Ayithey, Minister of Environment, Ghana; René Castro Salazar, Minister of Environment, Costa Rica; Min Zhu, Deputy Managing Director, International Monitoring Fund; Ma Zhongyu, Deputy Secretary-General, Government of Ningxia Autonomous Region, China; Park Seung Hwan, Korea Environment Corporation; and Christian Friis Bach, Minister for Development Cooperation, Denmark

High-level Side Event on Sustainable Energy for All

Organized by UNIDO

This event showcased commitments to actions by all stakeholders, including heads of states, CEOs and heads of civil society organizations, towards reaching the objectives of the SE4All initiative.

The first session, "Sustainable Energy is Powering the Future We Want," was chaired by Kandeh Yumkella, Director-General, UNIDO, who enumerated the achievements of the SE4All initiative so far, and said that the "real action" on SE4All will start on 1 July 2012.

Donald Kaberuka, President of the African Development Bank (AfDB), emphasized the importance of public policy and regulations and the need of funds to design projects in the energy sector. He said the AfDB has committed US\$ 1 billion per year towards achieving universal energy access in Africa.

Andris Piebalgs, former EU Commissioner for Energy, on behalf of José Manuel Barroso, EC President, announced the establishment of a technical assistance facility of € 15 million for the next two years, and also € 400 million to leverage a total of US\$ 8 billion to support sustainable energy investments.

Richard Branson, Founder, Virgin Group, talked about the "energy revolution" through the SE4A initiative and urged countries to end fossil fuel subsidies.

Armando Emilio Guebuza, President of Mozambique, said the country approved its bio-fuels and renewable energy policies and strategies in 2009 and 2011 respectively, aimed at creating a sustainable and diversified energy matrix in Mozambique.

Yumkella announced other commitments to the SE4All initiative, including: US\$ 1 billion commitment by the OPEC Fund for International Development and US\$ 2 billion dollars by the US.

Chad Holliday, Chairman, Bank of America, chaired the session on "Sustainable Energy is Powering Opportunities." Helle Thorning-Schmidt, Prime Minister of Denmark, said that Denmark has set aside € 50 million to support the SE4All objective of universal energy access by 2030.

Kris Gopalakrishnan, Executive Co-Chairman, Infosys Ltd, said that Infosys is using its expansion as an opportunity to allow academic institutions and others to test energy efficiency technology, hypotheses and theories.

Freundel Stuart, Prime Minister of Barbados, said that for the SE4All goals to be met, clear implementation pathways need to be established.

Luis Alberto Moreno, President, Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), called for greater coordination and commitment from stakeholders, saying that for universal access to be attained in Latin America, US\$ 1 billion must be mobilized.

Helen Clark, Administrator, UNDP, chaired the session on "Sustainable Energy is Powering Development." Irene Muloni, Senior Minister for Energy & Mineral Development, Uganda, said Uganda has established a clear vision for achieving the universal access target by 2050, noting that a feed-in tariff for renewable electricity has been set.

Brian Dames, Eskom, said that where policy makers can't drive the change needed to achieve the SE4All goals, business should drive the change using an appropriate business model.

Kimball Chen, CEO, Global LPG Partnership, said the Global LPG Partnership, said the Partnership has begun to work in Africa to bring clean, modern energy to approximately 50 million people.

Paul Magonette, Belgian Minister for Development Cooperation, outlined examples of where Belgium has assisted in implementing sustainable energy policies in developing countries.



Helen Clark, UNDP, stressed the important role resident coordinators play in achieving sustainable energy for all.



Brian Dames, Eskom, said that governments need to provide frameworks and policy to incentivise a change towards sustainable energy.



Kimball Chen, CEO, Global LPG Partnership, said that the SE4All provides a useful platform to foster cooperation in support of the Global LPG Partnership.

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High-level Side Event on Sustainable Energy for All

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The session “Sustainable Energy is Powering People and Innovation” was chaired by Adnan Amin, Director General of IRENA. Leena Srivastava, Executive Director, The Energy Research Institute (TERI), said the SE4All goals should be achieved using a bottom-up, multi-stakeholder approach.

Baburam Bhattarai, Prime Minister of Nepal, noted that in creating a sustainable energy future, Nepal has prioritized the use of hydropower electricity generation as well as solar home systems.

Nick Clegg, Deputy Prime Minister of the UK, outlined a number of ambitious domestic programmes to meet efficiency and renewable energy targets, including “The Green Deal,” which aims to retrofit UK building stock to be more energy efficient.

Mahmoud Mohieldin, Managing Director, World Bank Group, said that in order for SE4All targets to be met, an additional US\$ 40 million per annum from the private sector will be necessary.

Moderating the panel, Michelle Bachelet, Executive Director, UN Women, reflected on the importance of energy access for girls and women, mentioning PPPs, the expansion of educational opportunities and the creation of thriving green markets.

Amb. Carlos Pascual, Special Envoy and Coordinator for International Energy Affairs, US State Department, announced a US\$ 2 billion dollar commitment, which will be used to create conditions for business investments, facilitate technical partnerships, and finance overseas private investment corporations investing in energy.

Haruhiko Kuroda, President, ADB, recalled that despite Asia’s impressive economic growth, 17% of the population has little or no access to electricity. Kuroda highlighted ADB’s efforts to fill this gap, including its Energy for All Partnership, which aims to provide modern energy to an additional 100 million people in the Asia-Pacific region.

Josué Tanaka, Managing Director, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, identified cooperation with banks, investors, cities, utilities and project developers as key channels for increasing energy efficiency, particularly in Eastern Europe.

Giuseppe Recchi, Chairman, ENI, called attention to the importance of energy development that affords adequate environmental protection and is accessible to youth, local communities and future generations.

Robert Orr, Assistant Secretary-General, Executive Office of the UN Secretary-General, described the vision of SE4All as one that meets the energy needs of villages, cities, and stakeholders.



Irene Muloni, Senior Minister for Energy & Mineral Development, Uganda, said that Uganda is planning to increase the share of renewable energy in the national energy mix.



Chad Holliday, Chairman, Bank of America, said that the SE4All Initiative could be the biggest PPP of all time.

More information:
<http://www.sustainableenergyforall.org/>

Contact:
 Sustainable Energy for All Secretariat
 <info@sustainableenergyforall.org>



L-R: Helle Thorning-Schmidt, Prime Minister of Denmark; Chad Holliday, Chairman, Bank of America; Luis Alberto Moreno, President, IADB; and Kris Gopalakrishnan, Executive Co-Chairman, Infosys Ltd