

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to this important global conference, which is being co-hosted by UNIDO together with the Government of Austria and the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis in this wonderful setting of the Hofburg Palace in Vienna.

I am very encouraged to see so many ministers, high-level experts in energy and economics, and industry and civil society representatives from around the world gathered here today. A few years ago, it would have been a rather different audience. Experts, yes – but not so many of them – and not so many senior political or industry figures either. The fact is that energy was, until recently, the missing item on the global agenda.

Why was this so? Maybe we fooled ourselves into thinking there was no urgent need to address energy issues. After all, the once-feared “end of oil” had failed to materialize, and still seemed far distant. In fact, oil and gas prices had remained relatively low since the 1970s.

Any potential effects from the burning of fossil fuels still seemed relatively abstract to many people. Some even claimed that the science behind it was suspect.

On the economic front, why would industrialized countries ever want to jeopardize their prosperity and growth by jettisoning the fuel that drove their businesses? Jobs would be at stake!

And, as for poverty in the developing world – well, with HIV/AIDS, hunger and civil strife such high priorities – where on earth did energy fit in to the equation?

Not only were we short-sighted, but we were complacent and, dare I say, negligent.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we must not make that mistake again.

Our conference this week is entitled: “Toward an Integrated Energy Agenda Beyond 2020: Securing Sustainable Policies and Investments”. Allow me to explain this a little further.

We say *beyond 2020*, because we know now that we cannot afford to think only in the short term where energy is concerned. The lead times for change are long. The strategies we adopt now will have repercussions reaching far into the future.

We talk about an *integrated approach* not only in terms of finding the right energy mix for our needs, but also to underline energy’s interrelationship with virtually all the global challenges we face, as well as the need for partnership to put a new energy agenda to work.

We highlight *sustainable policies and investments* because of the undeniable symbiosis that binds energy with the climate change agenda in particular. I firmly believe that they are two sides of the same coin.

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With your indulgence, I would like to focus now on four issues which, for me, go to the heart of the energy debate, and which I would urge you to keep in mind over the course of your discussions and deliberations during the week.

The **first** of these is the key role of **energy for development**. Let me give you some examples. About 2 billion people still rely on traditional biomass for heating and cooking – and the resulting indoor air pollution is responsible for 1.6 million deaths per year in the developing world. According to the World Health Organization, this puts household biomass use just behind malnutrition and lack of access to sanitation as a cause of death.

In addition, more than 1.6 billion people have no access to electricity.

How can we accept this in the 21st century?

Indeed, almost every problem facing a developing nation is also an energy access problem: health, education, agriculture, lack of productive industries for economic growth – and the list goes on. We simply must integrate energy into our strategies for

poverty reduction and growth in these countries. Likewise we must always be mindful of the impact on poverty of the decisions we take on energy policy.

The **second** point I wish to make is the need for **greater investments into clean energy**. To emerge from the current global economic crisis and to mitigate climate change, we need nothing less than a clean energy revolution – optimizing energy efficiency, forging ahead with renewable energy, and making technology transfer a reality.

The economic potential for such investments is huge, in developed and developing countries alike. In poorer countries, energy access is a real problem in rural, off-grid locations in particular. Localized and low-cost renewable energy solutions can boost productivity and employment prospects, as well as preventing flight to urban areas.

On a global scale, 2.3 million people have found jobs in the renewable energy sector over the past few years, even though only about 2 percent of worldwide primary energy flows from the sector. Compare that to the 2 million jobs in the oil and gas industries and you can sense the possibilities for the future! And this is not even taking into account the likely catalytic effect on downstream industries!

Clean energy could be just the boost the world needs for a new, green, industrial revolution.

This leads me to my **third** point – the nexus between **energy and climate change**. We are about six months away from COP-15, and one essential aim of our Conference this week is to provide an energy perspective to help “Seal the Deal”.

We need to get the message to Copenhagen that energy efficiency, and the deployment of clean technologies such as renewable energy, constitute a top priority for the post-2012 framework. It is also vital that we promote the *opportunities* – and not just the challenges – for low-carbon, energy-efficient technologies as part of a just and lasting agreement to be struck in December.

My **final** point is closely related to the need to work together on climate change. We also need a **global partnership for energy**.

For too long, the international community has neglected to cooperate on energy issues. The United Nations still has no one agency for energy matters. But it does possess a useful coordination mechanism, UN-Energy, which I have the privilege to

chair. UN-Energy brings together 20 organizations in the UN system, and makes a major effort to ensure that the UN contributes in areas where strategic interventions on energy issues would have a major impact.

The prime objective of my chairmanship is to further strengthen the UN system's response to the challenges we all face in a world where energy and climate security have become defining issues.

Our work in UN-Energy builds on three pillars – Energy Access, led by UNDP and the World Bank; Energy Efficiency, led by UNIDO and the IAEA; and Renewable Energy, led by UNEP and FAO.

There is much more that we can do in the UN system to work together on energy. But we must also look outwards. That is why the UN Secretary-General has founded an Advisory Group on Energy and Climate Change, which he also kindly asked me to chair. We held our first meeting last week, bringing together business leaders and experts to help the UN prepare for Copenhagen and beyond. In fact, the Advisory Group has more non-UN members than UN members. This kind of broad partnership is crucial if we are to make the right choices on energy.

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You have a full and challenging agenda over the next three days, and I do not propose to keep you from it any longer. I hope that the main message you will take from my words to you this morning is that we were wrong in the past. Energy matters. It matters for poverty reduction and sustainable development. It matters for economic growth and combating climate change.

We urgently need a long-term solution to the world's energy needs, and this can only be achieved through working together.

Thank you.