

Key note, Secretary-General Johannes Kyrle

Minister Migereko, Chairman of the Forum of Energy Ministers of Africa,
Mr. Secretary-General Wutscher,
Ambassadors, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Colleagues,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this year's Meeting of the Global Forum for Sustainable Energy which is devoted entirely to African developments.

Over the last few years, energy has moved up the strategic agenda of political leaders everywhere. An important re-evaluation of energy use in development cooperation and by developing countries has taken place in synchronicity with the larger political re-orientation, both by the donor community as within partner countries. The international conference, Renewables2004, in Bonn (which was followed by a major meeting in Beijing in fall 2005) and the Dutch Energy for Development Conference in 2004, Nordwijck, contributed to putting renewables higher up on the agenda. While renewables are to be promoted because of concerns for sustainability (both in terms of social and environmental sustainability), they become more attractive also in the current context of energy security considerations, since they support diversification and hence decrease dependency on a few fossil fuel sources.

The European Union has taken a number of important steps to give energy its due weight in development cooperation; let me briefly mention

- the European Consensus on Development Cooperation which lists energy as one of the areas where the Commission is seen to have comparative advantage;
- the EU Energy Initiative which is endowed with 220 million € through its Energy Facility and will mainly co-finance projects that deliver energy services to poor rural areas and support better governance and management in the energy area;
- and the infrastructure initiative vis-à-vis Africa which will focus inter alia on transboundary energy infrastructure and will support regional institutions and stakeholders.

There are also very encouraging developments in developing countries, in particular on the African continent. Frameworks for regional power pools are being created in several African regions. In addition to the creation of a West-African power pool, the members of ECOWAS have adopted a “White Paper” on energy access to the rural and peri-urban populations of the ECOWAS sub-region. For CEMAC, the Brazzaville Declaration on the Integration of Energy into Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) takes an important step for accessing of development funding for energy projects in the region. With assistance from the EU, work is ongoing in the Eastern African Community (EAC) on a regional policy to strengthen access to modern forms of energy for rural and peri-urban populations. The African conference on hydropower, hosted by South Africa in March 2006, created significant political momentum to consider hydropower as a politically and economically viable energy source on the African continent.

With the creation of FEMA, Forum of Energy Ministers of Africa, African leaders have given themselves an important platform and I am particularly pleased that we have among us the current Chairman of FEMA, Minister Migereko of Uganda.

FEMA is determined to address some of the main African energy challenges:

- low per capita consumption of modern energy at an average of 350 kWh (compared to East Asia with about 1000 kWh and Europe 3 750 kWh; OECD Countries over 8000 kWh);
- overdependence on Biomass (about 67 %);
- low access to modern energy at an average of 8 % (the lowest in the World)
- declining infrastructure investments;
- low utilization of hydropower resources; even though Africa is ranked among the continents with the highest hydropower potential in world, only 7 % of hydropower resources have so far been developed.

I trust that Minister Migerenko will share with us FEMA’s strategy to address these severe challenges.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This GFSE occurs in the lead-up to the 15th Meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-15) in May 2007.

Given the many emerging and budding initiatives in developing countries and the favourable international environment to accelerate action towards more sustainable energy systems, we should fully seize the opportunity provided by CSD-15.

Since a plethora of general recommendations is on the books already, emanating from CSD 9 and from the Johannesburg Platform for Implementation, we should all abstain from proposing more general recommendations. Rather we should seek to build on existing or emerging initiatives, especially in our partner countries, and formulate recommendations in such a way as to strengthen them or help them overcome any obstacles they might face.

Recommendations should be tailored to regional needs and to thematic particularities.

Given the discussions at CSD-14, some themes seem particularly worthwhile:

- the resurgence of hydro-power, in particular in Africa;
- the emerging markets for and trade in bio-fuels;
- up-graded use of biomass to enhance energy efficiency and reduce indoor pollution;
- schemes for enhancing energy efficiency;
- mixing public and private moneys judiciously to finance energy for sustainable development.

Another strand of reflexion begun at CSD 14 that warrants continuation in my view is the better dovetailing of energy for sustainable development considerations with climate change concerns.

The following three days will give ample opportunity to up-date yourselves on what is happening in Africa, to forge alliances and to strategize. I wish you fruitful discussions, memorable human contacts and a little bit of time also to enjoy Vienna and its hospitality ! And do plan to come back to another edition of GFSE, in another year!