

“Renewable Energy in Central Asia: Creating Economic Sustainability to Solve Socio-Economic Challenges”

Opening Remarks by

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- I would like to welcome everyone to the conference, and to thank the organizers for their work. Renewable energy is a very important subject in Central Asia, and this is a very timely conference.
- As you know, President Obama has made development of renewable and alternative energy a high priority for the United States. I am pleased to note that this focus is shared by Tajikistan as well. Both of our countries have supported the establishment of IRENA – the International Renewable Energy Association, with headquarters in the United Arab Emirates. I would like to applaud the government of Tajikistan for its work to support and foster the development of alternative energy – not least through its participation in this conference.
- Tajikistan, like much of Central Asia, has huge hydropower resources. But these resources are cyclical: for half the year, the population of Tajikistan faces serious energy rationing. This affects not only individual families, but commerce and industry as well. It is difficult to run a factory, for example, on just a few hours of electricity a day.
- While there are a number of new hydropower projects under development, diversifying Tajikistan’s energy production is an important step in developing its economy and its human potential.
- Fortunately, Tajikistan and other Central Asian countries are endowed with great potential in other areas, including solar power, wind power, biogas, and wider use of small and mini-hydro power stations:

- Many parts of Tajikistan, especially in the south, receive a good deal of sunshine, making them ideal locations for solar heating and electricity generation;
 - As anyone who has taken the flight to Khujand knows, the winds blow strongly in the north, and many areas of Sughd have good potential for wind generation;
 - A largely agricultural country, bio-gas is a promising technology for much of Tajikistan;
 - Throughout the country there are numerous fast-flowing streams and small rivers that make ideal sights for mini-hydropower stations.
- These sources of energy have many advantages:
 - They are clean, releasing no greenhouse gases and other pollutants into the atmosphere;
 - They are flexible and can be developed on small or large scales as appropriate for individual applications;
 - Much of the technology involved is relatively simple, and costs are coming down;
 - Greater use of renewable and alternative energy solutions helps relieve pressure on the grid.
- One roadblock to the effective use of alternative energy in Tajikistan has been the lack of clear rules governing small-scale energy producers. I am pleased that a draft law dealing with these and other issues is being developed and now rests, I believe, with the Energy Committee in the lower house of parliament.
- I hope that the passage of this law will accelerate the development of new alternative energy projects. The development and diversification of Tajikistan's energy sector is truly a win-win scenario: It will provide more power for citizens and businesses, contribute to the country's overall economic security and give Tajikistan experience in a new sector that will grow substantially in importance in the years to come.
 - Although the United States is focused on development of alternative energy resources, I want to emphasize that this sector has great potential for other countries. India, for example, has become a leader in producing small-scale alternative energy inputs. Tajikistan has similar potential.

- Despite this great potential, at present there is relatively little understanding among the population of Tajikistan about alternative energy. I hope this conference will be a starting point for Tajikistan's population to gain more knowledge about many of the relatively inexpensive techniques available for harnessing renewable sources of energy.
- Once again, I would like to welcome you to the conference. I am certain that you will find it useful and productive.