

24 May 2012

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,
President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Foreign Policy Association “The Future of Energy Conference”**

Mr. Noel Lateef, President of the Foreign Policy Association,
Mr. Richard Navarre, President, Peabody Energy and Director of the Foreign Policy Association,
Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to address the “The Future of Energy Conference”.

I thank the Foreign Policy Association for inviting me to discuss how to foster a sustainable future through re-drawing the energy picture.

There is no doubt that the global energy market has recently experienced significant shifts, including since the Arab Awakenings began last spring.

It is no secret that the political protests in some MENA countries have injected significant risk-related volatility into the international energy market.

A new dynamic has thus emerged in the global market, and it is expected to have a lasting impact on global development.

The organization of this Conference, focused on how changing energy needs are affecting the global landscape, is therefore both timely and relevant.

It is particularly relevant to the work of the United Nations, and its General Assembly.

Allow me to briefly touch on three developments in the United Nations on the issue of energy.

First, 2012 has been declared by the General Assembly as the International Year of Sustainable Energy for All.

I was very pleased to officially launch this International Year in January in Abu Dhabi, during the Fifth World Future Energy Summit.

By celebrating this International Year, the General Assembly established a platform for raising awareness about the importance of addressing energy issues.

The International Year also draws attention to the pressing need to develop a renewable energy sector, and to promote efficient energy, water use and waste management.

As part of this International Year, Member States and international organizations should work to create an environment that will foster access to energy and energy-related services, as well as the use of new and renewable energy technologies.

The international community should also promote innovation and strengthen employment and investment opportunities, in order to address the growing need for sustainable energy.

Second, I would highlight the “Access to Energy for All” initiative of the United Nations Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

This timely initiative, undertaken in support of the General Assembly, aims to ensure that all parts of the world will enjoy access to sustainable energy by the year 2030.

Third, as President of the General Assembly, I have selected “Sustainable development and global prosperity” as one of the four key pillars of my Presidency.

I did so to emphasize the great significance of sustainable development at this point in our collective history, and to help chart the way forward.

To help consolidate the work of Member States, I am holding a number of meetings this session on energy and sustainable development.

Just two days ago, on the 22nd of May, I convened an interactive thematic debate of the General Assembly entitled “the Road to Rio+20 and beyond”.

During the debate, many delegations emphasized that energy is one of the critical issues of sustainable development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

More than a billion people continue to live without access to electricity.

It is clear that the basic energy needs of their daily lives are not being met.

Today, more than any time in the past, there is an urgent need to ensure the sustainable use of energy and to address the challenge of energy poverty.

Without question, the provision of sufficient and low-cost energy can help to eradicate poverty and improve the well-being of humankind.

Low-cost energy can raise living standards and help achieve sustainable development.

It is well acknowledged that the more energy we provide to communities, the greater the impact will be on food security, health, education, transport, communications, water and sanitation.

Energy has therefore become an important component, if not an essential means, of achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Unfortunately, over the past decade, the international community has not managed to agree on meaningful action to tackle the challenge of climate change, including energy poverty.

The international community must take serious action to address the impact of climate change.

I would urge the adoption of a new paradigm of consumption and production.

A paradigm that is designed to:

Limit greenhouse gas emissions;

Develop mechanisms to improve energy efficiency and ensure that clean technologies are applied to fossil fuels;

Build capacities

Facilitate access to renewable energy; and

Transfer technology.

Given the global nature of the challenges, threats and opportunities that energy presents, international collaboration is crucial between all interested parties.

This includes governments, the academic world, private sector and civil society.

I would call for leaders in policy technology and business to work together, to develop new ways to shape the future of renewable energy, while also focusing on sustainability.

At the same time, global energy prices must remain stable.

Environmentally friendly means of using clean fossil fuels, including natural gas, must be found.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Next month, world leaders will gather at the United Nations Conference for Sustainable Development in Rio.

They will come together for a once-in-a-generation opportunity to secure a sustainable future and a more equitable world.

My hope is that world leaders will re-draw the energy picture, by agreeing to concrete steps towards eliminating energy poverty.

My hope is that the international community will formulate global strategies for increasing access to clean energy, improving energy efficiency, and accelerating the spread of renewable energy technologies throughout the world.

This is a golden opportunity, and we must seize it.

I would end by highlighting my support for the work of this distinguished audience.

I am confident that the outcome of your thoughtful, expert discussions will be very useful to the General Assembly's efforts to eliminate energy poverty.

Please, let us continue to work together, towards a more just and equitable world for all.

Thank you for your kind attention. I wish you every success.