

Welcome Address by Patrizio Civili, Assistant Secretary-General, DESA

Third Research Coordination Meeting/Workshop on Indicators for Sustainable Energy Development, New York, 13-16 September 2004

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs is pleased to host the Third Research Coordination Meeting/Workshop on Indicators for Sustainable Energy Development and we welcome you to the United Nations Headquarters and to New York.

As you know, we have been working with the International Atomic Energy Agency and other agencies for some time now to develop a set of energy indicators for use in developing countries as a tool to achieve sustainable development. Early results were presented at the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, or CSD-9, in 2001. With the assistance of other international agencies and national institutions, including the International Energy Agency, a methodology was developed that guided the initial selection of indicators. This effort was in line with and complementary to DESA's work on developing and testing sustainable development indicators. CSD-9 identified a number of key energy issues important for achieving sustainable development goals – they are energy access, energy efficiency, renewable energy, advanced fossil fuels technologies, nuclear energy technologies, rural energy and energy and transport. Energy indicators applied at the national level can provide a valuable guide for countries undertaking measures and policies in these areas.

Energy was discussed again the next year at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg. The international community built on decisions taken at CSD-9 and stressed the relationship between access to energy and the alleviation of poverty, an important Millennium Development Goal. The Summit decided to facilitate access for the poor to reliable and affordable energy, in the context of larger national policies to foster sustainable development. Another important outcome of the Summit was the urgent call for increasing the share of renewable energy in the total

energy supply. Decisions taken at the Summit also relate to improving energy efficiency, using cleaner fuels, and reducing market distortions and phasing out subsidies that inhibit the achievement of sustainable development.

Meanwhile energy experts from international agencies, led by the International Atomic Energy Agency and including the International Energy Agency, Eurostat, and the European Environment Agency as well as ourselves, continued working on identifying and refining a core set of indicators. These can now be used in assessing current energy trends and policies geared to achieving objectives articulated at the Summit, and providing information in a format that aids implementation of Summit decisions at the national level. They can help: to integrate energy into socio-economic programmes; to enhance the contribution of renewable energy, energy efficiency and advanced energy technologies to meeting the growing need for energy services; to increase the share of renewable energy; to reduce the flaring and venting of gas; to establish domestic programmes on energy efficiency; to improve functioning, transparency and information in energy markets; to reduce market distortions; and to assist developing countries in their domestic efforts to provide energy services to all sections of their populations.

We believe that your efforts in applying these indicators at the national level can play a vital role in encouraging action-oriented policies and measures for energy in the overall context of sustainable development. However, we see benefits of your work spreading beyond Brazil, Cuba, Lithuania, Mexico, the Russian Federation, Slovakia and Thailand. We believe that they can serve as important examples or case studies for other countries tackling similar problems and facing similar constraints and barriers in their efforts to achieve sustainable development. The energy sector is vitally important – its use is necessary for economic development yet it is also associated with adverse environmental impacts. We are pleased to note that these indicators deal with energy in an integrated manner that does not prescribe policy but enables a country to analyze data and trends essential to identifying the most appropriate policies and measures in its specific national context. We are pleased to be associated with this effort.

As you may know, the Commission on Sustainable Development now works on a two-year cycle with the first year devoted to review and appraisal of progress made and the second year devoted to policy deliberations on how to overcome barriers and constraints identified in the first year. Energy for sustainable development will be considered in the 2006/2007 cycle and we hope that this group can provide an input to the Commission's work as case studies – which your reports clearly are – and by encouraging other countries to adopt this valuable analytical tool. The regional implementation meetings that lead to CSD energy deliberations could provide an ideal forum for dissemination of your work.

The special issue of the Natural Resources Forum on energy indicators scheduled for the Fall of 2005 is another venue for disseminating this work, and we are pleased with the serious commitment each of you has made.

Indicator work is also undertaken by DESA's Statistics Division in the context of follow-up to major conferences and for monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals, and there may be synergies for these efforts and your work. This meeting might provide an opportunity to explore such possibilities.

In closing, allow me congratulate you for your work so far, and wish the very best for a successful review and finalization of your applications of the indicators for sustainable energy development in your countries.