

**Opening Remarks  
Ambassador Carmen Lomellin**

**“Cooperation on Sustainable Cities through the Energy and Climate  
Partnership of the Americas”**

**Monday June 3, 2013 9:15 AM**

Thank you, Sherry for that kind introduction. On behalf of the U.S. Permanent Mission to the OAS, I would like to express our gratitude to the government of Guatemala, and in particular to Minister Sobenes, for hosting today’s event.

I am proud to join Minister Sobenes and Secretary General Insulza in welcoming the distinguished participants who have joined us this morning. We are thankful to the Spanish Cooperation Training Center for providing us with this beautiful space, which will serve as the setting for a vibrant exchange of ideas and perspectives on an emerging topic that is of interest to us all.

As the Secretary General noted, the region of the Americas is the most urbanized in the world. By 2050, experts predict that nine out of ten Latin Americans will live in cities; the urbanization rate in the Caribbean will also continue to rise. The good news is that cities are the driving forces behind sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction, and true laboratories for democracy in our region and across the globe. Cities are centers of innovation and economic creativity where novel development models and practices are tested and can be replicated at the national level. We are especially pleased to have official representatives of three cities in attendance today and look forward to hearing from **Mayor Rivera** of Puebla, **Mayor Coro** of Santa Catarina Pinula, and **Dr. Ricardo Arango** of the municipal government of Medellin, regarding their efforts to promote the sustainable development of their cities.

As a brief aside, I will note that my first position in public service was in the office of the mayor of Chicago. I can personally attest to how difficult it is to run a city and have great respect for those who serve in municipal government.

As we celebrate the boundless potential of our cities, we must also acknowledge the reality that rapid urbanization has brought with it a number of pressing economic, environmental and social challenges. These challenges, shared by all countries, include declining infrastructure, lack of access to basic services, high levels of congestion and air pollution, vulnerability to natural disasters, and a shortage of adequate housing.

In the face of these challenges, we have the opportunity and the responsibility to work together to develop shared solutions. No single country or city has all the answers. With respect to the sustainable development of our cities and communities, we believe that some of the most

dynamic and fruitful collaboration will come about as a result of greater dialogue at the sub-national level.

These sub-national dialogues, of which today's roundtable is a great example, can facilitate the exchange of lessons learned and best practices related to urban design, clean energy, transportation safety, building energy efficiency, and resilience to natural disasters.

We believe that effective sub-national dialogues involve a two-way exchange of ideas between leaders of cities and communities. Today's event will provide us an opportunity to learn from innovative development models being piloted at the city and community level in other countries in the Americas. I am pleased that we have a representative of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency here with us to share what we are learning through experiments in sustainable development at the city and community level in the United States.

In 2012, with the goal of promoting greater cooperation on sustainable cities in the Americas, the United States was pleased to partner with the OAS to launch the *Sustainable Communities in Central America and the Caribbean* initiative. In this first phase of the initiative, 14 non-governmental organizations received grants to implement community-level demonstration projects.

These organizations were selected based on technical evaluations of the over 60 proposals that were received. We were really impressed with the caliber of the winning proposals and are pleased that all 14 implementers are in attendance today. As we explore the theme of today's event, which is how to move from demonstration projects to achieving scale, it will be important to hear from our implementers regarding the challenges they face as they seek to scale-up to achieve a larger impact.

The *Sustainable Communities* initiative is just one example of cooperation among OAS Member States under the framework of the Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas (ECPA), which was launched at the Fifth Summit of the Americas in 2009 in Port of Spain. ECPA was founded as a platform for engagement and partnership among governments, civil society, and the private sector. The goal of this platform is to facilitate the exchange of creative solutions, new technologies and best practices for addressing climate and energy challenges.

In the three years since ECPA was launched, OAS countries have collaborated on over 40 ECPA projects, and have committed more than 150 million dollars in support of bilateral and regional ECPA initiatives. Specific initiatives in which the United States has been engaged range from climate change adaptation workshops and solar panel installations in rural communities, to electricity regulation roundtables and energy efficiency workshops with regional leaders.

One initiative the United States has been proud to support is the Senior ECPA Fellows program. This program supports the travel of U.S. climate change and clean energy experts to Latin America and the Caribbean to share best practices and expertise in clean energy, sustainable urban development, climate change adaptation and deforestation. We are fortunate that our

experts' panel this morning includes a Senior ECPA Fellow, Dr. Maria-Paz Gutierrez of the University of California-Berkeley, who is an internationally recognized expert in sustainable urban development.

ECPA's flexible framework serves as an important model for future sustainable development initiatives. It creates opportunities for a number of OAS countries to take on leadership roles. For example, at the last Summit of the Americas, host country Colombia launched Connecting the Americas 2022, a ten-year effort to achieve universal access to electricity by enhancing electrical interconnections across borders. And Mexico has demonstrated exemplary leadership through the ECPA Energy Efficiency Working Group, bringing in governmental and industry officials to exchange information on best practices related to policy and regulatory frameworks, equipment certification and standards and labeling.

The countries of the Americas – and the people in our communities -- harbor a wealth of knowledge and experience on sustainable city and community development. We invite all OAS countries to contribute to future collaboration on urban sustainability through the OAS.

Today's dialogue will help us define some of the priority areas for this cooperation. It will also help us begin the process of identifying development models and practices that have achieved success in the Americas and can be shared with the international community at the 7<sup>th</sup> World Urban Forum in Medellin.

I want to close by once again thanking each of you for participating in today's important discussion.

Thank you.

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