

**Informal thematic Dialogue of the UN General Assembly on
„Energy, Efficiency, Energy Conservation and New and Renewable Sources of Energy”**

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Statement by the Permanent Representative of Iceland

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Improving access to cost effective energy resources is an essential component of poverty reduction strategies. More than 1.6 billion people still have no access to electricity and four out of five of those live in rural areas. In addition, two thirds of the increase in world energy demand over the next 25 years is expected to come from developing countries.

If we are to meet this demand and at the same time making the transition to a healthy and an environmentally sound world, we are not going to be able to rely on the energy structures of the past or proceed with business as usual.

This is not a question only of safeguarding the world's climate. Air quality issues are also at stake. Globally, indoor air pollution from fuels like charcoal is ranked in the top ten causes of mortality and may be responsible for up to 2.4 million premature deaths a year.

In discussing ways to improve access to environmentally sound energy services, we rightly put the accent on affordable technologies, easily applicable to different local conditions. But there is another area that should also be highlighted; the need to adapt new energy efficient technologies for use in developing countries.

The harnessing of geothermal resources for electrical production and space heating is one such example. Contrary to what many people think, economically exploitable geothermal resources are available in many areas, including developing countries, and may be a major renewable energy resource for at least 58 countries. Let me recall that less than 3% of the proven potential for electrical production from geothermal resources have been harnessed.

Examples from my own country and the United States suggest that the magnitude of hidden geothermal resources could be 5 – 10 times larger than the estimate of identified resources. If this were the case for other parts of the world, the upper limit for possible electricity generation from geothermal resources would exceed the total installed capacity of nuclear plants in the world today.

There was a time when hydroelectricity and the use of geothermal heat for space heating used to be regarded as newfangled “high tech”. Today, they are seen as mainstream technologies. The same applies to geothermal use for electrical production and other technologies in the field of renewables, be they wind energy, solar power, fuel cells and hydrogen technology, currently under development. What may be regarded as cutting edge luxury today, may be standard tomorrow.

We should not overlook the difficulties. For this to happen, we need to create the right incentives, not least through regulatory frameworks and market-based approaches, where governments and the private sector can join forces.

I was disappointed to learn from our presenters today that the funds allocated to R&D in renewable energy are diminishing. But we must stay hopeful and I very much hope that our interactive dialogue here today will give the needed impetus to our efforts in this area.