

WIREC 2008 Update – Tuesday March 4, 2008

The first day of the Washington International Renewable Energy Conference (WIREC 2008), was marked by exceptionally high attendance, with nearly 3000 participants registering for the ministerial conference. More than 100 official country delegations sent over 600 official party delegates, including more than 100 Ministers.

United States Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte welcomed the participants and gave a call to action for the three conference days ahead. (View his remarks [here](#).) He was followed by United States Secretary of Agriculture Ed Schafer, who laid out the opportunities presented by renewable energy and the challenges ahead. (Remarks [here](#).)

At the first Ministerial level plenary session, United States Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman helped to define the issues facing the renewable energy industries, along with Tony Hayward, the CEO of BP. Bodman gave an overview of U.S. renewables policy, and pointed out that with the demand for energy increasing at a soaring pace, renewables are necessary to meet global energy demands. Following Bodman, venture capitalist Vinod Khosla challenged WIREC participants to consider the true potential of renewable technologies. He argued that technology always leaps ahead of our most ambitious predictions, and said that by combining research and capital, there is no end to the potential of renewable energy.

Over lunch, participants listened to United States Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne discuss the potential of renewable development on Federal and public lands.

The afternoon began with the Ministerial plenary session on the Economic and Environmental Benefits of Renewable Energy chaired by United States Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Steve Johnson and European Union Energy Commissioner Andris Pielbags. During the plenary, a dozen Ministers took the stage to discuss the status of renewable energy deployment in their respective countries.

By the close of the conference, the Washington International Action Program (WIAP), a compilation of pledges from WIREC participants, had collected more than 60 pledges to drive up renewable energy. Developed nations in Europe contributed a number of impressive commitments, and a handful of African nations volunteered substantial actions.

Of note, Tanzania pledged that fully one million residents would gain access to electricity from renewable energy resources. And Cape Verde committed to increasing renewable sources of energy to 50 percent of market share by 2020, and to have one island running completely on renewable energy by that time.

Many private-sector companies contributed innovative methods of driving up renewable energy as well. Forrester Partners of the United Kingdom has committed to

giving every employee the financial support to switch their home electricity supplies to 100 percent renewable sources. My Organic Market, a company based in the United States, has decided to offset 100 percent of their energy usage by purchasing wind energy.

Pledges are being collected with our partner organization REN 21, and can be viewed online [here](#).