

Jamaica gets help to Develop Biofuel Industry

The Organisation of American States (OAS) has committed to providing technical assistance for biofuel development and policy support in Jamaica, through an inter-governmental energy project, supported by the Governments of Brazil and the United States.

The overall goal of the project is to develop and implement Jamaica's biofuels policy and establish a strong legal and regulatory framework for a vibrant biofuel industry, that includes both bio-ethanol and bio-diesel. Speaking today (May 19), at the official launch of the programme, at Jamaica House, in Kingston, Energy and Mining Minister, Hon. James Robertson, said the project represented an important plank in a broader vision for the country. "Our biofuels policy represents an essential element of the broader energy revolution that is to come, as we seek to implement the National Energy Policy and the goals of Vision 2030," he said. He pointed out that the project, using current and future technologies, will contribute to the development of the country. "It will develop local expertise and knowledge of emerging technologies through scientific exchange, international industry and government internships, sabbaticals and professional seminars and conferences," he said. "We cannot afford to fail, because to fail at a project such as this and policy implementation, would be failing our nation, our children and our future," the Minister added. Mr. Robertson further remarked that the launch was a fitting follow-up to the November 2008 tri-partnership agreement signed by Jamaica, the United States and Brazil, for co-operation on the development of biofuels. "Today we have achieved another milestone that will advance the operationalisation of the National Energy Policy 2009/2030 and contribute to the long term sustainability of biofuel development in Jamaica," he said. The Minister said that the country has taken a few necessary steps to make biofuel development a success. These, he said, included the divestment of the sugar industry and sugar estates, and achieving renewable energy from sugar cane. The OAS Representative in Jamaica, Dr. Joan Neil, said the agreement is a reflection of the reality that it is important to pool resources, to develop synergies and to work together to support the needs of hemispheric states in the emerging energy sector. Dr. Neil informed that the technical support to be provided will involve the transfer of necessary skills to the relevant entities through the Biofuels Task Force, and consultants, Winrocks International. She said this will include the facilitation of the sharing of perspectives among the respective stakeholders, as well as advice on appropriate technologies. Energy and Biofuels Officer in the Office of International Energy and Commodities, the US State Department, Richard Simmons, said the collaborative approach to the development of biofuels and bioenergy was a critical step towards the affordable access to energy and responsible and sustainable treatment of the environment. -JIS