The Permanent Mission of Iceland
to the United Nations

Statement by
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at the

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Improving access to reliable, affordable, economically viable, socially acceptable and environmentally sound energy services

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Iceland appreciates the positive twist that our panelists have put on the state of electricity access in the world today. The more than four billion people that do enjoy such access include countries that used to be far behind only a few decades ago. Like some of the countries mentioned, my own country, Iceland, was able to make the transition to full electrification in a relatively short period of time by harnessing its own indigenous energy resources. This could provide encouragement for others. Among the things that may be required is to enable developing countries draw more on their own indigenous energy resources in an affordable way.

There are various ways of doing this, including through the deployment of leap-frogging technologies like hydrogen. It is true that technology for using hydrogen as an energy carrier is still at the development stage and remains as yet quite costly. Nevertheless, it does hold promise as an important component of the sustainable energy economy of the future and many developing countries could in due course derive substantial benefit from it. One of the main advantages of hydrogen technology is that it may enable poor developing countries make flexible use of localized renewable resources such as hydropower, wind, bioenergy, geothermal resources and solar power.

The development of stationary fuel cells for small localized grids is of particular interest, for example, for remote areas. Energy efficient fuel cells could be used for providing electricity for cooking from metangas or other biofuels, that are now burned in open stoves.

Allow me also to say a word or two about geothermal resources for electrical production. To be sure, the share of geothermal resources in world energy supply is expected to remain modest over the medium term. Nevertheless, one of the advantgages of geothermal technology is that it is based on proven technologies with a century of practical experience behind it.

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.

The two options that I have mentioned for drawing more on hydrogen use and geothermal resources in developing countries may seem expensive or high tech to many. But coming back to the experience of my own country, I can assure you that what is high-tech today may be part of a mainstream practice tomorrow, given the right incentives and an enabling environment.