



**Swiss
Confederation**

SWITZERLAND

CSD 14

General Statement, May 1, 2006

Mr. Chair,

We probably all agree on the fundamental and strategic importance of the energy sector in the wider context of sustainability; if we could alter our approach to the production and use of energy, we could probably trigger a chain-action global change in our production and consumption patterns and formidably accelerate the implementation of a sustainable path of development – would it be in the industrialized or the developing countries.

For this reason, the reform of the energy sector is to play a central role in the wider implementation of our Swiss National Sustainable Development Strategy 2002-2006.

Our government essentially works towards two interrelated objectives:

Firstly it aims at achieving a revenue-neutral shift from labour-taxation to energy-taxation. We recognize, however, that this issue is very complex and sensitive and therefore requires the furthering of an inclusive dialogue amongst all national stakeholders.

Secondly it attempts in an integrated manner to boost energy efficiency – in particular to reduce the CO₂ emissions – and to increase the proportion of renewable forms of energy in our overall energy consumption. One of the approaches selected is to encourage the transfer of freight from the road to the rail, using amongst other incentives a fee on heavy vehicles. Furthermore, voluntary measures were taken by some industry sectors which succeeded in harvesting positive results, e.g. in the cement industry. However, overall results cannot be considered as sufficient and the Swiss government is currently considering the introduction of compulsory measures.

Improvements in the production, distribution and use of energy are closely linked to poverty reduction and the provision of essential services – but are also linked to undesirable effects on the environment in an unfortunate vicious circle. What is thus needed are strengthened efforts to increase energy efficiency at all levels on the one hand, and substantial energy savings on the other hand by changing our consumption and production patterns. And very importantly, we also need cleaner energy not only in industrialized countries, but also in developing countries. Finally, it goes without saying that we also need energy sources from a safe production. Switzerland indeed, entirely agrees with the notion of improving access to reliable, affordable, economically viable, socially acceptable and environmentally sound energy services.

These different challenges and needs are most often strongly interrelated. Looking at it from a positive point of view one can agree that this constellation conceals a high potential for win-win solutions at various levels. As an example, gains produced through energy efficiency have positive impacts in different domains: Companies can produce at lower costs which means also higher profitability for them - and consumers should profit from lower prices. Higher energy efficiency – at the condition that energy gains are not written off by increased energy consumption - exposes our natural environment to less damaging emissions. An additional gain resulting of improved energy efficiency is the decrease of negative health impacts. Finally the atmosphere will be less burdened and therefore the anthropogenic impact on the climate change with all its negative consequences could be mitigated.

As the excellent reports produced for this CSD session clearly show, political commitment is key to master these many challenges. This is best demonstrated by successful experiences such as the “Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer” or the recently launched initiative of Sub-Saharan countries to eliminate lead from gasoline.

Mr. Chair, Switzerland is strongly committed to cooperate with all partners during this two-years cycle to identify and implement innovative, effective and successful solutions for energy for sustainable development.