

Governor Linda Lingle

Welcoming Remarks

MAJOR ECONOMIES MEETING ON ENERGY SECURITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Honolulu, Hawai'i

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JIM CONNAUGHTON, chairman, White House Council on Environmental Quality Control:

I think I will take advantage of the hush in the room. Good morning, everybody. Welcome to Hawai'i. Aloha. Please everyone say aloha. I see that most of the ties have been lost. That's very important if you're in Hawai'i. They don't believe in ties, but they do believe in a wonderful world for ourselves and for our children and that's what our discussions are about. So I'm pleased to welcome you to the second major economies meeting.

As we committed ourselves last September, we wanted to have a very constructive and good outcome in Bali, and I think we can all be very pleased that we have a Bali Roadmap to which we have all committed ourselves, and I think it is on that foundation and in support of that outcome and agreement by the end of 2009 that we now reconvene here in Hawai'i.

I will have some logistical information after we hear from our speakers, but I'd like to go directly to our two speakers. I'd like to begin with our home state host for this event, Governor Linda Lingle. I have now had the occasion to become good friends with Governor Lingle over the years. Many of you met her last night. For those of you who missed the event, we had a wonderful celebration of Hawaiian culture by some children and a celebration of Hawaiian culture being in the home of sort of one of the cultural centers of Hawai'i.

Governor Lingle has been a very practical, very passionate. She's been a very professional, and a very global leader for the State of Hawai'i. And I think you'll hear in her remarks of some of her vision for what this state is seeking to achieve in its environmental stewardship and the economic welfare of its citizens, and how they're trying to take that vision and share their experiences and lead in many key areas with those of us in the rest of the states, but also with others around the world.

You should know that we're in the middle of a political season and Governor Lingle was voted one of the delegates from Hawai'i to her state party, then on the way to the National Convention. And so even as we talk about these issues in a policy setting, these outcomes do have political consequences. And here in America, I hope you are seeing a broad consensus across party lines, throughout regions of the country, on the need and the urgency to take more aggressive actions with respect to climate change and with respect to improving our energy security, and I think you will hear a little bit of that as well from the Governor.

So without further introduction, I'd like to give you Governor Linda Lingle.

GOVERNOR LINDA LINGLE:

Thank you very much, Jim.

Aloha everyone. Good morning. Above everything else I would like to share with you today, I want to communicate what an honor it is for the people in my state to be hosting a meeting that the whole world is watching, and it must be a tremendous weight on all of you to know that everyone in every country is paying attention to what you're doing, and we are all, as citizens of the world, relying on the ultimate outcome of your discussions.

To Jim Connaughton, Dan Price, Assistant Secretary Andy Karsner, Secretary Yvo de Boer, to all the distinguished guests around the world, we are so glad you're here and as we would say in Hawaiian, E Komo Mai, which means welcome.

Now, looking around this room with the drapes pulled and no windows to the outside, you could be anywhere in the world. I don't think they want you to see the beauty of Hawai'i, so you'll stay focused on your work, but I did speak to the conference organizers and asked them to please let you out of the room from time to time to take a look around and to view all the beauty that the state has to offer.

Global representation, that all of you are apart of, reflect that these issues of energy security and climate change are clearly global issues that transcend borders and must transcend politics. It's about the planet's future and those generations who will come after us.

Yesterday, I substituted for a friend of mine as a chaperone for his daughter's fourth grade class at the marine center here in Honolulu down at our harbor. And the man who was giving the tour to these fourth graders, they're about 10 years old, he said to them as he was showing them all of the garbage that washes up in the northwestern Hawaiian islands and what it does to marine life. He said to the children, our generation has not done a good job of protecting the planet and now it's up to you, meaning you children, to help turn things around.

But, of course, we can't wait for these 10-year-olds to grow up. They are growing up with a different sensibility and a different desire and much more of a global outlook than we grew up with, but we simply can't wait for them to grow up and that's why the burden has fallen to all of you.

I think it's very appropriate that you're here in Hawai'i for this meeting and I hope you will draw some inspiration from the very unique place Hawai'i is, both its natural beauty and its natural resources and also its diversity of people.

On the Big Island of Hawai'i, where some of you will have a chance to visit later in the week, is Mauna Loa, the largest active volcano on Earth. For the past 50 years, Mauna Loa has had a station for measuring carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. It is the oldest, most continuous measurement of carbon dioxide in the world and its data has been used in many landmark studies. I do hope most of you will have a chance to visit Mauna Loa, and I know that it will inspire you.

In Hawai‘i, the environment, the land, and the ocean have tremendous cultural significance, especially for our native Hawaiian people, our host culture.

Our state motto in Hawaiian is Ua mau ke ea ‘o ka ‘āina i ka pono, which means the life of the land is perpetuated in righteousness. This motto guides people and it guides our Government decisions, and it’s a principle that can be applied around the world.

Our state, in this way is no different than the rest of the world, as we face the pushes and pulls of economic development, growing populations, and technology.

Hawai‘i, I am not proud to say, is the most oil dependent state in America. It goes against your intuition. You would think because of our isolation and the need to have oil travel long distances and the fact that we have so many natural resources, this would not be true, but this is true. We are the most oil dependent State in America with more than 90 percent of our energy supply being imported. We also have the highest utility rates of anywhere in America, and the highest gasoline rates for transportation fuels.

We also have many small islands which mean that we have an unconnected power grid currently. And as I mentioned, we are the most isolated set of islands anywhere on the planet. But other Pacific islands face similar obstacles and challenges, and we hope to serve as a partner and perhaps even a model for some of these other island countries and territories.

Hawai‘i is blessed with an abundant supply of natural resources, sun, wind, wave, biomass, geothermal, and even ocean thermal energy conversion, and we have made some progress in the last two years.

In 2006, the Legislature and I adopted a package called Energy For Tomorrow and it initiated some fundamental change in our energy policy. And then last year, I signed the Global Warming Solutions Act that the Legislature passed which mandates that statewide greenhouse gas emissions be reduced to 1990 levels by the year 2020. Only two other states, California and New Jersey, have similar laws.

But the greatest stride that we’ve taken occurred on Monday with Assistant Secretary Karsner when we signed a major partnership agreement with the United States Department of Energy called the Hawai‘i Clean Energy Initiative.

This is the first such partnership with the United States Department of Energy. In that sense, it’s unprecedented, but I think also very innovative. Usually those of us in the states like to think we’re the ones who prod the Federal Government because they’re so big and slow moving, but in this case, it’s the Federal Government who is really out in front and we’ve set the bar high for our state purposely.

We set it at 70 percent of all of our power coming from clean energy within one generation.

Assistant Secretary Karsner said that it is no coincidence that these meetings are being held here because he views Hawai‘i as a test bed for technology and a model for the world. His vision is that all of you could come back here in a few years and you could witness firsthand the progress that we have made.

This approach that we're taking with the Federal Government is multi-faceted and it includes that our smaller islands will be 100 percent powered by renewable sources within a generation.

We'll focus on energy efficiency at military installations and housing. That locally grown crops will provide the biofuel, not imported crops. That we will change our regulatory and policy framework and that, as I was talking with some just before this meeting started, we will involve all residents and businesses. There will be stronger public-private partnerships, because for these efforts to succeed, it can't be government alone.

These fundamental changes in the business of energy systems is good business, and I had the privilege to meet a major business leader, Bjorn Stigsson, President of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, and I told him how glad I was that he was here, because it's important that business recognize that this change of perspective as it relates to energy security and climate change is good business.

There will be a good return on investment. It will be profitable. It will help us to diversify the economy here. It will create new businesses and careers for young people. It will advance technology. And for Hawai'i, it will keep billions of dollars a year that we currently send out of our state, it will keep it here working for the people of Hawai'i.

Now, we're already making some exciting strides, and I'll mention a couple of specific projects. Our Department of Transportation has just let out an RFP to put 12 solar arrays on our various buildings, including at our airports that will supply 34 megawatts of power. That will mean that we can put off importing 130,000 barrels of oil every year just because of this one government-initiated project.

On the island of Maui, Kaheawa Wind Farm produces 9 percent of that island's energy and 30 percent of its off-peak power, and I'll be visiting that wind farm with Assistant Secretary Karsner later on in the week.

Next week there's going to be a major announcement about a wave energy project off the Maui coast.

The Big Island today is producing one-third of its power from renewable. We're also pursuing ocean thermal energy conversion at the Natural Energy Lab of Hawai'i to bring cold sea water from 3,000 feet down and have it generate electricity.

The world is changing so rapidly and we are committed in our state to lead by example. By your countries and organizations attending this meeting, you've also made a commitment to lead by example.

Much of our progress in environmental issues today in our state is due to cooperation and collaboration and we only began to make progress when we put our egos aside and we put our politics aside, and we may be a small state, but we're like every state, we have a lot of politics, we have a lot of ego, it's only when we were able to get beyond our politics and our ego and rely on the strength of each other that we began to make significant progress.

Our success as a world will increase exponentially when we work together and energy security and climate change demand nothing less of us.

Again, on behalf of the people of my state, let me thank you and express my deep gratitude. The fact that you're here, that the world is watching you deal with these issues in our state brings honor to our people.

Mahalo.

JIM CONNAUGHTON:

Thank you, Governor. And I think all of you can see why Governor Lingle is one of our Nation's great leaders.