

Speech of the Honorable Rida Azimi, Member of Parliament (Meshrano
Jirga), Afghanistan
Presented at the U.S. Energy Association, August 16, 2006

Ladies and Gentlemen, honorable guests,

To begin with, let me express my sincere thanks on behalf of the upper house of the Afghan parliament to USAID and the United States Energy Association for their high regard to the people of Afghanistan by inviting us to this program.

It is a great pleasure for me to have this opportunity to gather with our counterparts in our brother country Pakistan, and it is a great privilege to participate in a program that has been designed on concrete issues such as energy policies, development of knowledge in the energy sector, market policies, and - the most important thing for me as a legislator - reform of the energy sector, legislative strategies and developing a direct relationship between south Asia and the U.S. on policy markets.

Afghanistan is a country with many resources, including high capacity for water energy and gas in the north.

But years of war and disaster have made it impossible to use those resources or even start strategizing on how to improve the energy sector situation.

Today, let me take this opportunity to specify some points of how we can start this strategy and achieve the purpose of energy independence in Afghanistan.

Presently, diesel power costs \$25- 30 KW while the estimated cost for importing power will be \$4 per kw. But if we start using micro-hydro it will be cheaper than that.

We need large investments, which will take time to develop. We need surveys to recognize priorities, as there are provinces with large populations and energy resources, but no power supply.

Why are surveys needed?

- On one side, the population is growing
- On the other hand, this kind of start will give the ability to recognize the resource and energy production areas
- This is needed to provide security for instruments and investments.
 - For example, I am from Parwan province, and I did a survey there. This province has four rivers, the Shoful, Salang, Ghurband and Panjshir Rivers. If we establish dams on these rivers, there will be no need to import electricity. However, until now, we have not had the financial resources to develop dams in these areas.
 - Presently, there are two generators in this province, with a combined capacity 2.4MW of power. Now, however, the population has increased, and has a demand for 7MW of power. There are 13 other power plants that have deteriorated and are no longer usable that we could use if they were refurbished.

CAPACITY

At the same time, Afghanistan has a big need for capacity building in the energy sector.

Frequently, because of the security situation, outside experts cannot visit regional provinces. It would be better for local staff to be trained; if not, projects will be damaged and improperly maintained. If they were working as professionals, the projects would be sustainable.

NE OF AFGHANISTAN

NE is the base of utilities for use of transmission lines.

- 1) Border of Uzbekistan, transmission potential from Pule Khumri to Kabul, Jalalabad and Gardez.
- 2) Border of Tajikistan, from Shirkhanbandar to Pule Khumri
- 3) Turkmenistan border, from Shiberghan to Mazar –e- Sharid and Pul-e-khumri

In this transmission project, we have cooperation and support from USAID, KFW, ADB, India, Germany; but we are looking for more and strong cooperation from the international community interested in this field.

CURRENT PRODUCTION / KABUK

In Kabul, the energy production is about 254MW, which is insufficient for a population of 3.5 million. We need 600MW. There is a plan to import an additional 300MW from Uzbekistan.

As a person who is involved in the legislative branch, we are trying to work hard in this regard. Of course your point of views and ideas will help us greatly.

Once again, thank you very much US Energy Association, US Agency for International Development for thinking about the energy sector in Afghanistan. We are now waking up to the energy sector in Afghanistan. We have also enjoyed seeing the beautiful Washington, DC.

Today I really think that American people are thinking globally and want to make peace and comfortable life for all.