

U.S.–MEX: ENERGY

Delgado: Alternative Energy



Photo by Bryan J. Busch.

Solar panel in Tulum, Mexico.

If we want to develop real strategies for managing oil and energy in Mexico, rather than wasting time and opportunities on debating the ownership of oil or the constitutional basis for oil management and the energy sector, we should consider these five important points:

First, the strategic diversification of energy sources is essential for Mexico. We have great wind, solar, geothermic, biomass and oceanic potential in Mexico, not just hydrocarbon potential. We are rich in these other resources, but we are missing the opportunities they present by focusing all our strategic efforts on oil. We are failing to develop policies that protect future generations, and these are policies that we must begin putting in place today. Not in the future: today!

Second, as a country and as a society, we are failing to take into account the environmental impact of producing electricity in Mexico. We have underestimated the growing costs of energy production and transportation. Promoting alternatives to fossil fuels in Mexico through renewable energy sources would help reduce the damage to the environment and protect Mexico's environmental riches.

Third, the energy sector isn't just about meter readings and electricity bills. Nonetheless, public policy is focused on the generation, distribution and cost of electricity. What

we do at home or the office (even in government offices) is also very important. It is cheaper to save energy than to generate it, but we are doing nothing to promote energy conservation.

Fourth, energy policy also entails industrial, political, technological and employment policy and therefore has an impact on the economic development of the country. Mexico can be competitive in the development and production of technology for small-scale power generation and renewable energy. At the end of the day, decisions on energy policy are also decisions that affect employment, development of technology and industrial opportunities.

Finally, the energy sector also involves society, but the current debate is far removed from the community. The government and political parties have been unable to explain the concrete benefits of their proposals. The benefits for the community today and in the future must be made clear. Energy is an issue of concern for everyone living in this country, and citizens must be involved.

Martha Delgado is Mexico City's Minister of the Environment. This article was adapted from her comments at the 2008 U.S.–Mexico Futures Forum.