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Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development 2002

David Garman United States Assistant Secretary for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy responds to a question asked at a US Government Media Briefing during the Johannesburg Summit Press Conference of August 29th 2002.

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Q. NHK : A question I suppose for Secretary Garman on the issue of the clean energy initiative. I wonder, given that renewable energy is such a major battleground here in Johannesburg, to what degree renewable energy will be promoted as part of this initiative? Beyond that, a little bit political, if you can go for things like the Clean Energy initiative, why can the U.S. not commit to the target being proposed by the European Union in Johannesburg?

A. Garman: The quick answer to that is we are looking for projects and opportunities to make renewable energy happen now. I will give you an example. Right now today, in Morocco, we are doing an assessment of the Moroccan wind resource. It looks to be quite good. This will provide an opportunity to promote new wind generation in Morocco, not only to take care of their domestic needs, but in fact, they may have enough of this wind resource to export to Europe. So we are looking at concrete projects that will actually produce renewable energy today. Now as for the larger question of why not commit. Again, renewable energy is expensive. Last night I went to an African energy forum where some of the delegates were quite adamant about the expense of photovoltaics in the village context. Yes, there are some places and some times where photovoltaics makes sense, particularly if you can avoid the infrastructure investments. But as a general proposition, right now renewable energy is expensive. It tends to be more expensive than other sources. When we want to provide access to energy to as many people as we can, we do not want to necessarily commit ourselves to a certain percentage going toward a more expensive alternative. We will use renewable energy in the context of these partnerships wherever we can. We will promote energy efficiency in these partnerships in every instance. But we want to match the energy supply with the need of the country we are dealing with.

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<http://2001-2009.state.gov/g/rls/rm/2002/13211.htm>