

Brief Summary of Opening Comments at Village Power 98

Presented at Village Power 98 Scaling Up Electricity Access for Sustainable Rural Development Washington, D.C., October 6-8, 1998

Allan R. Hoffman

- It is a pleasure to welcome you on behalf of Secretary Richardson, Assistant Secretary Reicher and the U.S. Department of Energy
- It is good to see so many people in the audience - more than 500, compared to the 33 who attended the first Village Power conference in 1993
- The Carter Administration took the first serious look at Federal policy for renewables in 1978 by carrying out the 30-agency Domestic Policy Review of Solar Energy
- The past two decades have seen considerable progress in renewables development, and today renewables is becoming a big and growing business
- The World Bank, through its Solar Initiative and subsequent actions has a unique opportunity to advance worldwide use of renewable energy and make a real difference in people's lives
- Energy is key to rural development
- Use of renewables is key to reducing local environmental impacts of energy use in rural areas, particularly impacts on women and children in developing nations who often carry most of the burdens associated with gathering fuel and using energy
- Use of renewables is also key to addressing global climate change issues arising from energy use
- While today's energy system is largely dependent on fossil fuels, this situation cannot be projected into the long-term future
- We are in the early stages of an inevitable transition (50-100 years) to a new world energy system largely dependent on renewables