

**Speech of H.E. László Sólyom, President of the Republic of Hungary  
at the opening of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Energy Forum  
Budapest, October 28, 2008**

Mr Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen!

The future of energy generation and energy distribution, as well as the future affordability of energy are indeed pivotal issues. Solving them in a timely and fair way can make the difference between peace and war, between well-being and misery.

Looking at the data and trends of the present, we have no time to lose.

Currently we are exploiting our decreasing fossil energy resources at an accelerating rate. The International Atomic Energy Agency estimated in 2005 that between 2008 - 2030 the global energy need will grow by minimum 40 %. Speaking recently at the Catholic University in Budapest, professor Dennis Meadows – co-author of the famous study “Limits to Growth” – quoted estimates setting the gap between the energy generating capacity of today and the needs in 2050 as 17 – 20 Terawatts.

Today there is an intolerable „energy injustice” on the globe. The per capita average of the global energy consumption is around 70 Gigajoules, while per capita consumption in Europe and Japan varies between 200 – 260, and in the US over 500! The large majority of the human race has no energy available to operate public facilities for health, education and leisure, let alone for private comfort.

The new consumer economies: China, India, Brazil, South Africa, and others in South-East Asia, and South America are trying to close this gap. This effort

however, unleashed a desperate race for the oil in the middle East, the gas in Central Asia, and the remaining global reserves of coal and uranium. The atmosphere of vulnerability is spreading. Our way of managing nature has indeed become an issue of security.

For the economies of the so-called North, the transition from a fossil energy base, and a resolute turn to renewable energies can secure supplies and prevent the development of intolerably high scarcity prizes of energy.

The change-over will have to pass through stages requiring parallel strategies. These are: a more rational use of energy in households and private life, a circular industry wasting neither materials nor energy, and shifting over to energy generation from renewable resources.

At the moment the model of prosperity of the North is resource-intensive, and this model is still widely advertised both North and South. The North – we in this room included – is still promoting an outdated lifestyle and an outdated model of building, settlements, transport, energy generation to a fast growing, eager audience.

We Hungarians also have a lot to learn, because we have a lot to do. The energy needs of the Hungarian economy, measured in GDP per one unit energy used, are still very high compared to other OECD countries: four times more than in Austria or Germany, and five times more than Denmark, Switzerland or Japan. There is a lot of room for improvement.

Instead of effective energy use or of how to save energy the topical issue in Hungary is how to satisfy hypothetical future energy demands. Not the costs of introducing low energy technologies are discussed but whether the lifetime of our

single nuclear power plant be prolonged, or exactly where new, huge power plants will be built in Eastern Hungary. Neither the question of shifting our system of centralised energy supply to a decentralised one has been raised.

In the current situation of urgency, the development, large-scale testing and wide application of sustainable energy technology cannot be left to the market processes. Technological breakthrough needs about 20 years, according to the estimates from modelling and technical experts.

All alternatives must be based on an „energy ethics”, an ethics of fair access to energy, and environmentally sustainable energy generation patterns. The spirit of transparency, solidarity, and inter-generational equity can guide us to be boldly innovative and co-operative in our approach.

László Sólyom