

LOW CARBON DEVELOPMENT A HUGE OPPORTUNITY FOR LATIN AMERICA

Central America isn't usually seen as a hotbed of renewable energy, but for two countries at least, that's starting to change. And it's driven as much by worries over energy costs and security as it is by concerns over carbon.

In the Dominican Republic, three major new wind farms will come onstream this year, adding a combined 133MW of capacity. Enrique Ramirez, President of the National Energy Commission, said that the country is looking to wind power as a significant way to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels. It recently set a target to source 25% of its energy from renewables by 2025, supported by a landmark law providing for incentives which have galvanised rapid investment in the sector. For a country whose energy needs are heavily dependent on unsustainable government subsidies to oil, this makes sense in more ways than one.

These developments coincide with the launch of the Spanish-language version of a key Forum for the Future report in the Dominican Republic later this year.

El clima futuro para el desarrollo (The future climate for development), explores the “huge opportunity” around low-carbon, climate-resilient development. It considers future responses to climate change in low-income countries, and includes four scenarios for different possible futures in 2030 [see ‘Can the south become climate-resilient?’].

The report also highlights the potential for cities to take a lead on the issue, even as national governments falter. The urban context is particularly relevant in Latin America, where 79% of the population live in cities – projected to reach 85% in 2030. Last year, at the World Mayors Summit on Climate in Mexico City, 135 city leaders signed up to a range of commitments to reduce emissions and promote measures to adapt to climate change.

Mexico City is leading the way, with a comprehensive, 15-year ‘Green Plan’ which addresses seven key areas for action:

- habitability and public space
- land conservation
- water supply
- transportation and mobility
- waste and recycling
- air pollution

- Energy and a climate action programme.

The Mexican capital has committed to spend 7% of its total yearly budget to help reach its target of a 12% reduction in carbon emissions by 2012 (from a 2008 baseline).

Source: <http://thisbigcity.net/low-carbon-development-a-huge-opportunity-for-latin-america/>