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Energía y Recursos Naturales

**ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN CENTRAL AMERICA:  
PROGRESS AND ACTION TOWARDS THE  
FULFILLMENT OF THE GOALS OF THE  
CENTRAL AMERICAN SUSTAINABLE  
ENERGY STRATEGY**

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This document was prepared under the supervision of Victor Hugo Ventura, Chief of the Energy and Natural Resources Unit of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters. Victor Hugo Ventura and Ryan Carvalho produced substantive content with the collaboration of Eugenio Torijano and Manuel Eugenio Rojas, Research Assistants.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Energy Efficiency (EE) activities began in the Central American countries during the seventies as a result of the first oil shocks. However, various factors, including socioeconomic and political problems during the eighties and low crude oil prices, resulted in EE activities being given lesser importance. Nevertheless, the need for energy efficiency and conservation became a priority once again at the beginning of this millennium and especially after 2003 when international crude oil prices began to rise, showing no sign of returning to previous levels.

During the period from 2003-2007, the Central American countries put in place an Energy Emergency Plan that was prepared for the Central American Integration System (SICA) with the support of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), implementing this plan with the cooperation of international agencies, donors and multilateral banks. The Plan prioritized EE initiatives and promoted increased use of Renewable Energy Sources (RES).

The discussion of strategies to address the oil crisis resulted in the countries developing a regional energy agenda. With the support of ECLAC, the institution responsible for the base studies, the Central American Sustainable Energy Strategy 2020 (Energy Strategy 2020) was approved in November 2007. The strategy is focused on promoting sustainable development of the regional energy sector. The Energy Strategy 2020 contains four goals linked to EE (energy efficiency in lighting, refrigerators and industrial electric motors; reduction of electricity losses in transmission and distribution; reduction of consumption of oil derivatives in public and private transport sectors; and promotion of sustainable, efficient and clean firewood stoves in rural areas).

Six years after approval of the Energy Strategy 2020, the status of Energy Efficiency (EE) programs and initiatives in Central American countries varies greatly. The process of restructuring and transformation of the energy sectors, which commenced in the nineties, has yielded varying results. In some countries, the creation or strengthening of a government institution (ministry or department) responsible for energy policymaking and governance has only been achieved in the last few years. This has been a positive factor for the organization and promotion of EE initiatives and projects.

The conditions of net oil importing countries and the negative impacts of high oil prices have raised awareness among governments, institutions and society in general of the importance of EE. However, the supply of electricity and other highly sensitivity issues (especially those related to reviews and price adjustments, tariffs and subsidies, and social opposition to new hydroelectric and easements for

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