

US/NZ Discuss Future Development Of Hydrogen Economy

Despite strained relations due to their differences over the war in Iraq, New Zealand has welcomed a surprise announcement by the US Government that it is seeking international collaboration for the development of technologies that would spur development of the hydrogen economy.

According to some scientists, a hydrogen-based economy offers nations the tantalising prospect of an unlimited, pollution-free, source of energy.

The NZ Associate Minister of Energy, Harry Duynhoven, said he welcomed the announcement, which comes at the same time that he and the US Secretary of Energy, Spencer Abraham, are attending the International Energy Agency's (IEA) Ministerial Governing Board meeting that occurs every two years.

The IEA has become the leading authority on world energy forecasting. In addition to ensuring oil security, it plays a significant role on diversity of energy supply (including investment and exploration issues);

renewables; climate change; and reviews of international energy policy.

Duynhoven said that although the hydrogen economy was not originally on the agenda, the announcement by Secretary Abraham was particularly timely as the NZ Energy Minister is due to visit one of the world's leading experts in the development of hydrogen and fuel cell technologies, Professor Amory Lovins of the Rocky Mountain Institute in Colorado.

"I am very excited about my visit to the Rocky Mountain Institute later this week. Especially, following my discussion with Spencer Abraham regarding the commitment of \$1.7 BB by the United States Government towards an area of research that I believe New Zealand can play a leading role in.

"It is excellent timing that, in my capacity as New Zealand's Associate Minister of Energy, I am visiting Professor Amory Lovins in the US this week, and hosting discussions with him and a number of his colleagues during their visit to New Zealand next week.

"Spencer Abraham expressed considerable interest in the links that I have developed on behalf of New Zealand with the US-based Rocky Mountain Institute over quite some time.

"I hope that this relationship will provide a focal point to facilitate the development of a partnership involving the United States and New Zealand working towards the development of a sustainable hydrogen economy in the future, along with bolstering trade relations between the two nations.

"This is just one of the positive results of this trip for New Zealand and precisely the type of goal I was hoping to achieve as a consequence of my attendance at such a crucial meeting.

"In addition to the hydrogen economy, I shall continue to promote New Zealand's oil and gas exploration potential to the other member nations and play a leading role at this event to ensure that New Zealand's interests in international energy security issues, such as maintaining oil stocks, are adequately protected", Duynhoven concluded.