



OIL INDUSTRY BEST PRACTICES

H.E. RENE G. ORTIZ
FORMER MINISTER OF ENERGY AND MINES
ECUADOR



The grand future challenge of the oil industry is indisputably to move from the state of well-known good practices towards best practices in order to step up into the next world of quality and hyper-connectivity era.

Unquestionably, civil society – genuinely immersed nowadays in environmental issues of the sort – is ready to agree to take in and accept the prolonging of a world energy consumption situation dominated by fossil fuels. It seems – given the success of new extracting technologies for both conventional and non-conventional oil and gas deposits – the inevitable energy path for at least another hundred years. The latter is based upon the world oil scenarios under which the oil industry is working and its participation in the demand energy-mix for the near future. In fact, the coincidence of OPEC's oil scenarios in the 2013 *World Oil Outlook to 2035* and the BP *Energy Outlook 2030*. In the OPEC *World Oil Outlook*, projections to 2035 are set optimistically with "no shortages of oil and resources are plentiful."

Thus, oil remains a key energy source satisfying world's energy, material and transport needs to help generate better living standards. The assumptions are based on UN demographics in non-OECD countries with 63 percent of the 8.6 billion people becoming urban and India surpassing China as having the largest population. Unequivocally, both match the future with the same type of shifting trend for energy consumption, from OECD countries towards non-OECD countries. The BP *Energy Outlook* indicates 95 percent of the inevitable energy shift is captured by emerging economies, with India and China playing a key role.

In this context, the notion of a "quality call" – expected by civil society as briefly described above – can actually be seen also as part of the new geography of energy and certainly as part of human beings' lives in the future. Nonetheless, the statistic that fossil fuels' domination will unquestionably grow in near-future energy consumption does not mean the oil and gas industry can keep on managing and operating based upon a business-as-usual practice. For civil society, the quality call it is certainly addressing to oil operating and service companies around the world, is a "do it right" future challenge, along with a dozens of other industry challenges, in order to have a socially responsible oil barrel in the market place.

Oilmen are fully aware that, for an industry which is socially and environmentally blamed for being number-one responsible for world pollution, the remaining oil in the ground is to be found, discovered and developed under extremely sensitive conditions.

Work out there, along with powerful non-stop on-the-job training, can produce responsible clean oil, with the application of the latest state of the art social and environmental standard, EO 100™. That can lead the change from good practices to best practices, along with an independent certification and auditing and to a quality of work in the neighbourhood of zero tolerance. Actually, there are examples, in upper Amazon Basin operations in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, where the

industry is gradually moving into this unique social and environmental standard, the EO 100™. To paraphrase the lyrics of John Lennon's famous song, "You may say I am a dreamer, but I am not the only one."

In fact, navigating around the Internet can lead to the website of Ecopetrol, the national oil company of Colombia. The company statement, in Spanish, goes as follows: "Barriles limpios, respetar la vida, el medio ambiente y estar en armonía con las comunidades, es la mejor manera de alcanzar nuestras metas. Por eso queremos que los barriles que producimos en Ecopetrol sean limpios." (Clean barrels: to respect life, the environment and to be in harmony with the communities is the best way to meet our goals. Thus, we want Ecopetrol's produced barrels to be clean.)

Similarly, in Ecuador, Agip Oil, an Eni subsidiary, is recording a very best example of land rehabilitation practice at an abandoned platform site, in block 10, and an operation with zero oil spills for the last 15 years.

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The world oil industry has examples of dozens of similar operations which are reported at specialised publications only. The standard world media takes and reports the dark side of the oil industry with contamination headlines. Thus, the quality call for the industry is the most challenging journey to best practices.

At this point, it is worth mentioning that the oil industry might be considered one of those businesses where tonnes of money is invested and dedicated to scientific research and applied technology to do it better and proudly and positively assesses the high degree of expertise reached by the industry. But I think that we all know that human error is a stress-free cherished measurement often used to justify a task laxity by any worker at an operating site. That is negligence and cannot be accepted in the current hyper-connectivity era. It sounds as if that would be trivial or irrelevant. No. But the fact of the matter is that technologies, techniques and expertise involving a policy, a plan, a programme and an operating manual can fail if, in my view, on-the-job training is overlooked and not resolutely embraced in minute after minute of work. Thus, best practices ought to be considered part of the new geography of energy. ■