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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Committee on Sustainable Energy

#### Group of Experts on Gas

##### Fifth session

Geneva, 22 and 23 March 2018

## Report of the Group of Experts on Gas

### I. Introduction

1. The fifth session of the Group of Experts was held on 22 and 23 March 2018.
2. This report summarizes the discussions of the Group of Experts at its fifth session. All the documents and presentations of the session are available on the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) website<sup>1</sup>.

### II. Attendance

3. The session was attended by experts from the following United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) member States: Azerbaijan, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. A representative of the European Union also participated.
4. Experts from Brazil, Cameroon, China and Singapore participated under Article 11 of the Commission's Terms of Reference.
5. Representatives of the following international and non-governmental organizations participated: Energy Charter Secretariat, Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), European Biogas Association (EBA), European Gas Research Group (GEGC), Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF), German Technical and Scientific Association for Gas and Water (DVGW Ev), Global Methane Initiative (GMI), International Association of Oil and Gas Producers (IOGP), International Gas Union (IGU), International Group of Liquefied Natural Gas Importers (GIIGNL), International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation (IPIECA), International Sustainable Energy Organization (ISEO), Marcogaz, NGVA Europe, Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC), Slovak Oil and Gas

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=47520>.

Association, Society of International Gas Tanker and Terminal Operators (SIGTTO) and World Health Organization (WHO).

6. The private sector and academia were also represented.

### **III. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)**

7. The provisional agenda as contained in ECE/ENERGY/GE.8/2018/1 was adopted without amendment.

### **IV. Opening remarks (agenda item 2)**

8. In his opening remarks the Chair outlined the principal role of the Group of Experts, as an inclusive and neutral platform for governments and industry to meet and discuss sustainable and clean production, distribution, and consumption of gas in the ECE region. The Chair introduced the work plan for 2018-2019, which focused on:

- (a) Role of gas in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals;
- (b) Best practices in managing methane emissions along the gas value chain;
- (c) Role of gas in improving urban air quality;
- (d) Renewable energy and natural gas as the best combination to enhance the efficiency of the energy system;
- (e) Emerging issues;
- (f) Promoting sustainable and clean production, distribution, and consumption of gas and LNG in the ECE region.

9. Noting that the Bureau of the Group of Experts was very active over the past 12 months, the Chair called for the Bureau to be strengthened with additional capable experts willing to contribute to its work.

10. His Excellency Mr. Abbas Al-Naqi, Secretary General of OAPEC, delivered a keynote address on the role of gas in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals in the Arab Countries. OAPEC, in its fiftieth year of existence, aims to ensure universal access to modern energy services, double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency and double the share of the renewable energy in the global energy mix. Natural gas provides important mutual economic benefits and economic links between the Arab region and Europe.

11. The Director of the Sustainable Energy Division described the central theme of the fifth session “the role of gas in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”. Although gas is relevant to all three objectives of SDG 7 - accessing energy, accelerating the uptake of renewable energy, improving energy efficiency - the Director pointed out that the sustainable energy programme of ECE goes beyond SDG 7, because none of the SDGs could be attained without energy.

### **V. Elections of officers (agenda item 3)**

12. The Group of Experts elected a new Bureau to serve for a term of two years from the close of the fifth session. The members are: Mr. Francisco de la Flor (Spain) as Chair and Mr. Hasan Abasov (Azerbaijan), Mr. Otel Huseynov (Azerbaijan), Mr. Boris Maksijan (Croatia), Mr. Uwe Wetzel (Germany), Mr. Torstein Indrebø (Norway), Mr. Lukasz

Kroplewski (Poland), Mr. Alexander Karasevich (Russian Federation), Mr. Daniel Hooper (United States), and Mr. Rafael Jesus Huarte Lazaro (International Gas Union) as Vice-Chairs.

## **VI. The role of gas in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (agenda item 4)**

13. The Group of Experts discussed several examples of how gas and liquefied natural gas (LNG) gas could facilitate ECE member States' efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

14. The Group of Experts concluded that use of gas could enable ECE member States and other UN Member States to attain SDGs related to energy, poverty, hunger, health, gender, water quality, job creation, innovations, infrastructure, sustainable cities, sustainable consumption and production patterns, and climate action. Natural gas is particularly relevant to the three objectives of SDG 7 - access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy, uptake of renewable energy, and improvement of energy efficiency.

15. The Group of Experts recognizes the interlinkages between the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) and the SDGs, particularly SDG 13 (Climate Change). Given the role that gas could play in attaining the SDGs, the Group of Experts highlighted that ECE member States and other UN Member States could include the use of gas in their INDCs, where feasible and beneficial, as a way to achieve their greenhouse gas emission reduction targets.

## **VII. Promoting sustainable and clean production, distribution, and consumption of gas and liquefied natural gas (agenda item 5)**

16. Within its core mandate to provide a forum for multi-stakeholder dialogue on ways to promote the sustainable and clean production, distribution, and consumption of gas and LNG in the ECE region, the Group of Experts participated in an interactive round table on relevant political and technical developments on current and emerging gas topics.

## **VIII. Update on activities related to gas developments in United Nations Economic Commission for Europe member States and gas industry organizations and associations (agenda item 6)**

17. Experts from the Slovak Oil and Gas Association, the Greek Energy Forum and the National Physical Laboratory of the United Kingdom presented updates on the gas and methane related work in their respective organizations.

## **IX. Best practices in managing methane emissions along the gas value chain (agenda item 7)**

18. After being informed of the activities of the extrabudgetary project: "Methane Management in Extractive Industries (Upstream Oil and Gas/Downstream Gas)", funded by

the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), the Group of Experts noted the progress thus far in the project's implementation.

19. The Group of Experts invited ECE member States, gas companies, and the gas industry associations to complement this work by (i) contributing case studies on best practices for measuring, reporting, verifying, and reducing methane emissions throughout the gas value chain, and (ii) providing comments on draft documents related to the project as they become available.

20. Welcoming the collaboration with the Global Methane Initiative (GMI), the Group of Experts encouraged gas experts to attend the Global Methane Forum, 16-18 April 2018, Toronto, Canada. The Group of Experts invited the GMI Oil and Gas Subcommittee to hold its next meeting in conjunction with the sixth session of the Group of Experts in 2019.

21. The Group of Experts recognized the commitment demonstrated by companies, associations and organizations to manage methane emissions and encouraged all stakeholders to continue with this important work.

22. The Group of Experts highlighted the importance of regularly updating the data in National Inventories so that they reflect more accurately, transparently and consistently the volumes of methane emissions attributable to the gas sector and the results of emission reduction efforts.

## **X. The role of gas in improving urban and indoor air quality (agenda item 8)**

23. The Group of Experts concluded that natural gas is an important tool to reduce concentrations of airborne pollutants – nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, volatile organic compounds, sulphur dioxide, and particulate matter – and hence improve urban air quality.

24. After the presentation of IGU's Urban Air Quality report, featuring case studies from cities from around the world, the Group of Experts concluded that fuel switching from solid fuels to natural gas is a highly effective measure for improving local and regional ambient air quality. As demonstrated by the case studies, deliberate policy action plays an important role in enabling effective transitions, especially when it comes to infrastructure development. The Group of Experts thanked IGU for releasing the latest report on urban air quality on the occasion of this meeting. The Group of Experts offered its assistance in further dissemination of this material.

25. The Group of Experts recommended that, wherever practically possible, member States consider policy measures that promote the use of clean fuels and technologies such as gas (including biogas) instead of polluting fuels and technologies, including kerosene, traditional biomass stoves, and other solid or traditional fuels for cooking heating and lighting. This action would mitigate household air pollution and help achieve the SDGs related to poverty, gender equality, and good health and well-being.

## **XI. Activities and priorities of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and its Executive Committee and the Committee on Sustainable Energy (agenda item 9)**

26. The Director of the Sustainable Energy Division of ECE provided an update on the relevant outcomes of the twenty-sixth session of the Committee on Sustainable Energy, 26-28 September 2017. The Committee noted with appreciation the progress that the Group of Experts made on delivering on its mandated activities and the work plan for 2016-2017

and approved the request of the Group of Experts for extension of its mandate until 31 December 2021, with a possibility of extension, and its work plan for 2018-2019.

27. The Director informed the Group of Experts on progress in implementing the extrabudgetary project Pathways to Sustainable Energy managed by the Committee. As the role of gas in attaining the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for the UNECE region is crucial, the Group of Experts could have an important role to play in shaping the inputs and interpreting the outputs of the project. The next opportunity to do so could be a workshop on 24 September 2018.

28. The Director also informed the Group of Experts about preparations for the Ninth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development, 6-9 November 2018, Kiev, Ukraine, and invited the Group of Experts to take an active role in it.

29. The Director presented results of an external evaluation of the former ECE Gas Centre.

30. Discussing the possible upgrade of the Group of Experts into a Working Party, the Group of Experts recognized that this was a matter for ECE member States to decide.

31. The project "Pathways to Sustainable Energy" under the leadership of the Committee on Sustainable Energy represented a unique opportunity for the Group of Experts to explore the role of gas in sustainable energy. The Group of Experts was open for direct involvement in the project as it develops over the biennium. In particular, the Group of Experts could contribute with technology experience and know-how to the development of the scenarios to be modelled. To this end, the Bureau of the Group of Experts would discuss nomination of a focal point or *ad hoc* group. Further, the Group of Experts could participate in a multi-stakeholder workshop or open-ended dialogue in Q2 2019 to develop policy messages on gas resulting from the modelling and scenario building exercises and asked other Groups of Experts to do likewise.

## **XII. Exploring synergies between gas, renewable energy and energy efficiency (agenda item 10)**

32. The Group of Experts encouraged ECE member States to share experiences in harnessing the synergies between renewable energy and gas that increase the efficiency and reduce the carbon footprint of the energy system.

33. Welcoming the opportunity to work together with the Group of Experts on Gas, the Chair of the ECE Group of Experts on Renewable Energy expressed his Group's interest to continue to explore synergies through various joint activities. He noted the reality that a significant portion of energy supply is still provided by fossil fuels. The Group of Experts on Renewable Energy believes that gas, as the cleanest fossil fuel, could play an important role during the transition to a low carbon energy system.

## **XIII. Emerging issues (agenda item 11)**

34. The Group of Experts recommended to ECE member States to leverage the existing conventional natural gas infrastructure as a cost-effective entry point for developing low- or zero-emission alternatives, such as biogas, biomethane, synthetic gas, power-to-gas (hydrogen and syngas), or carbon capture and storage.

**XIV. Preparations for the sixth session of the Group of Experts  
(agenda item 12)**

35. The Group of Experts recommended the following topics for the substantive portion of its sixth session could be included: hydrocarbon potential of Eastern Mediterranean region and its access to gas markets; interplay between gas and renewable energy at the end-use (energy consumption) level; energy efficiency and energy management; or best practice guidance on how to adopt and modify USEPA gas star program. The Bureau will review these suggestions in the context of the Group of Experts' work plan.

36. The sixth session of the Group of Experts will be held in Spring 2019 in Geneva, back to back with the meeting of the Oil and Gas Subcommittee of the Global Methane Initiative.

**XV. Other business (agenda item 13)**

37. The representative of the Russian Federation invited gas experts to attend the Russian Energy Week that will be held in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, 3-6 October 2018.

**XVI. Adoption of the report and close of the meeting  
(agenda item 15)**

38. The report of the meeting was adopted, including the conclusions and recommendations, subject to any necessary editing and formatting.

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