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Welcome Statement & Matters Arising

**Mr. George Kowalski, Director, SED,
Seventeenth session of the Working Party on Gas
Geneva, 23 - 24 January 2006**

- Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates.
- It is a pleasure for me to welcome you on behalf of the Economic Commission for Europe to the seventeenth annual session of the Working Party on Gas.
- This morning I would like to inform you on the recent ECE Reforms, on matters arising from the Fifteenth (15th) Session of the Committee on Sustainable Energy, which took place on 28-30 November 2006, and on decisions taken by the UNECE Executive Committee regarding the programme of work in energy.

Secretary General & Executive Secretary

- But before doing so, I would like to note that the UN has a new Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, from the Republic of Korea, who took office on the 1st of January. And, as I informed you last year, Mr. Marek Belka, from Poland, joined the ECE in February 2006 as its Executive Secretary and Under- Secretary General of the UN.

ECE Reforms

- At your annual session last year, I informed you that member countries had approved a Work Plan on ECE Reform. These reforms have now been implemented.
- I would now like to very briefly outline for you these reforms and, more specifically, how they will affect the ECE programme of work in energy.
- Two major programmes were significantly affected by the ECE reforms. These are the Economic Analysis Programme, which was discontinued, and the Industrial Restructuring and Enterprise Development Programme, which was folded into a new Programme on Economic Cooperation and Integration, intended for the most disadvantaged countries in the ECE region. A new division was established within the Secretariat to service this new programme.
- Under the ECE Reforms, member countries specifically asked the Committee on Sustainable Energy to:
 - (i) streamline the energy activities and improve cooperation with other relevant institutions, in particular the IEA and the Energy Charter;
 - and (ii) strengthen activities in the fields of energy efficiency, cleaner energy production, energy security and diversification of energy sources, taking into account environmental concerns.
- At its recent annual session, the Committee on Sustainable Energy revised its terms of reference, reviewed its subsidiary structure (that is, the various intergovernmental and other bodies reporting to it) and reviewed the terms of reference of all its subsidiary bodies. This was done in response to the request of member countries to streamline the programme of work and strengthen certain elements of the programme.
- In this respect, I would like to note, in particular, the following decisions taken by the Committee:

- The establishment of a new Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Production from Coal and Other Fossil Fuels.
 - The discontinuation of the following bodies: the Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Coal in Sustainable Development; the Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Electric Power; and the Joint Energy and Environment Task Force on Reforming Energy Prices for Sustainable Energy Development.
 - As well, the Committee decided that the issue of energy security should be an integral part of the work of the Committee itself and be taken up as a periodic agenda item, annually or biannually, at annual sessions of the Committee. Consequently, the mandate of the Energy Security Forum was extended but only and solely for the purpose of completing its current unfinished tasks.
- The present members of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Coal and on Electric Power will be asked to join this new Expert Group on Clean Electricity Production.
 - The mandate of the Working Party on Gas was extended for five years with specific terms of reference, which I would urge you to review during the course of these two days. If you wish to adjust these terms of reference, please suggest revisions, which can subsequently be taken up by the Committee on Sustainable Energy when it meets in the latter part of this year.
 - Likewise, the mandate of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts on the Supply and Use of Gas was extended for 2 years, with specific terms of reference. The Ad Hoc Group should also review these terms of reference.
 - As far as the governance structure of the ECE is concerned, it was significantly altered and streamlined under the Reforms. A new Executive Committee, consisting of officials from the permanent Missions, was established to provide overall direction and guidance to the ECE. This Executive Committee was also tasked to approve

the set-up, renewal, discontinuance, terms of reference and work plans of groups under the Sectoral Committees.

- Following an exchange of views between the Executive Committee and the extended Bureau of the Committee on Sustainable Energy, the Executive Committee, on 11 December, endorsed the decisions taken by the Committee on Sustainable Energy regarding the programme of work, the structure of its subsidiary bodies and their terms of reference, which I have just described.

Annual Session of Commission

- Now, I would like to briefly turn to another subject, the upcoming Annual Session of the Commission, which will take place on 25-27 April. This session is noteworthy for two reasons. First, the ECE will celebrate its 60th Anniversary at the annual session. Therefore, there will be high- level personalities taking part in the event. Second, there will be a specific session or segment on “Sustainable energy policies: the key to energy security”. We are at the moment working on securing high- level representation for that segment.
- I would like to take this opportunity to invite you all to the annual session of the Commission as well as to the session on energy. We will be sending you more information on this over the next few weeks.

Programme of work

- Over the next two days, you will have the opportunity to discuss and share views on many issues related to natural gas, including securing reliable natural gas supplies in the context of sustainable development. You will also have the opportunity to review your own programme of work as well as the activities of other subsidiary bodies of the Committee on Sustainable Energy.
- As always, it will be a pleasure and privilege to hear from you about new developments in your own countries and to have presentations from other international governmental and non-governmental organizations, associations and companies on your programmes of work in the field of natural gas.

Conclusions

- In closing, I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to all of you for your participation and contribution to the work programme of the Working Party on Gas and its Group of Experts. I would also like to especially thank the gas companies that are supporting, and contributing financially, to the work of the UN ECE Gas Centre and contributing to the programme of work of the Working Party.