Welcome everyone! I want to take this opportunity to thank the members of this group for your continued support, it is an honor and a source of joy for me to help lead this group along with the able and generous help of our Bureau. We have new bureau members and I look forward to working with and getting to know each of you. My job is to facilitate and assist, and I call on all of you to use me in that capacity and to help me increase the impact of our work and effectiveness as we promote best practices, work to educate members of our industry, government, and the often changing constellation of stakeholders. Your continued work and innovative ideas are highly valued, and I know that the Secretariat recognizes the importance of your contributions. I want to extend a warm welcome to members of the Global Methane Initiative Coal Subcommittee, its co-chairs and Administrative Support Group. On behalf of our group of experts I thank the Global Methane Initiative and the USEPA for the financial support which made the aggressive workplan for the 2018-2019 biennium a success. Through their financial and expert support, the Group completed its second, best practice guidance, this one on the effective capture and use of abandoned mine methane. This report will be printed later this year, but already, these best practices have been disseminated at meetings in many venues. And in a parallel vein, I extend the bureau’s appreciation to the Group’s volunteer experts, which have over the last two years traveled to a number of coal producing countries ranging from Colombia to China and made many excellent and well received presentations.

And today I also want to welcome, Mr. Barry Worthington, who is sitting here with us and is the Chair of the Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Systems. Mr. Clark Talkington, who is a Vice Chair of our expert group and I had the pleasure of meeting with Mr. Worthington’s group over the last two days in an effort to strengthen our relationship and mutually support our goals of producing cleaner energy from coal. We are doing this by working to reduce methane emissions in the upstream supply chain while the CES works to reduce emission stemming from power production. You will hear from Mr. Worthington in a few minutes.

As we move into the next biennium, we must strive to maintain our relevance and effectiveness, as a Group we must consider that the world’s energy economy, understanding that the growing awareness of global climate change has evolved since the group was formed in 2004. Since that time, concern over continued use of coal and other fossil fuels has increased to the extent where open and honest discussion of emission reduction projects sited at coal mines has become more difficult. Financing and obtaining insurance coverage for methane emissions reduction projects
has become even more challenging. But as you will see from the work that has been done on the Pathways project over the last three years, which will be discussed in a few minutes by Ms. Iva Brkic, the use of coal in the global energy system will continue for some time to come. Therefore, our work to reduce methane emissions will become even more important as we move forward-- but we face headwinds. As I mentioned, Clark Talkington and I attended the Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Systems annual meeting and learned that 130 major banks are now refusing to entertain funding any coal related projects…this includes coal mine methane emission reduction projects. Yet, even as we look at current emissions data, methane emissions from coal mining is not significantly decreasing; in fact, in many countries, emissions are still increasing as the use of coal continues. In some cases, methane emissions are increasing even as coal mine output decreases. In the Asia Pacific region, where production of coal is on the rise and will be doing so for the next few decades, methane emissions are growing. We should also be aware that national emission inventories are somewhat less comprehensive than they could and should be. Many countries could use assistance from our experts to improve the accuracy of the inventories and that should be a focus of our outreach. Moreover, abandoned mine methane will continue to find its way to the atmosphere for years to come as coal mining complexes are shuttered when reserves are depleted or the mines are closed for other reasons, such as retirement of aging powerplants. Emissions from this source are not well documented in all but a few coal mining countries, and better inventories of this emission source should become a priority.

We are dedicating a session tomorrow to discuss future of our Group, its role, and its approach to ensure that we remain relevant in reducing emissions and disseminating best practices for maintaining safe mines as the energy economy of the world undergoes dramatic changes. I look forward to working with you all over the next two years. Thanks for being here!