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Statement

by

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at

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Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

I am pleased to be here with you today on behalf of the United Nations and would like to thank the Global Methane Initiative and the Climate and Clean Air Coalition for your hospitality, for organizing this important event and first and foremost for being such good partners. I am especially pleased to be able to be here and discuss how we can help each other to succeed.

In September of last year, world leaders came together at the United Nations in New York and adopted the historic 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, comprising 17 Sustainable Development Goals. A few weeks later, they met in Paris, and adopted the most comprehensive climate agreement in history. Together, these agreements form a most ambitious vision. We are the first generation ever with the ability to eradicate extreme poverty. And we are the last generation with the ability to tackle climate change. It is a huge responsibility, and we will not make it unless we work together.

Sustainable energy and mitigating climate change are two key pillars of these agreements. But how can we achieve our environmental and energy goals? For that, we need common sense, open minds and solid scientific data. We need to be realistic. And the reality is that, when it comes to sources of energy, fossil fuels will remain an integral part of the future energy system. Whether we like it or not, this is a fact. The share of fossil fuels in the global energy mix will likely decrease from today's 80% to about 40% by 2050. The world will continue to use significant amounts of oil, gas, and coal over the coming decades. We must not shy away from the key issues related to these resources.

Therefore, we must make it a priority to mitigate the negative impact of fossil fuels on the environment on the climate. The recommendations made in UNECE for carbon capture and storage and for methane management can help us to achieve exactly this. We have been ahead of the curve. These recommendations can help fossil fuel producers and users to be

seen as a part of the solution rather than as only the part of the problem. Shifting our perspective this way will bring key actors from all parts of the fossil fuel industry into our work. As top researchers from Oxford University argued in their recent study we cannot afford to invest in new fossil fuel plants without significantly reducing their carbon footprint.

But this can be done if we engage the entire stock of knowledge we can access globally. The first and most important step is to deploy the technologies that are readily available. We do not have the luxury of letting opportunities languish. Sadly, this is precisely what we are doing when it comes to methane management.

Despite available technology, at the moment methane emissions are not properly monitored and reported, let alone comprehensively abated or used for economic benefit. Yet, we know that methane is responsible for almost a third of today's global warming! However, methane is also short-lived. Therefore, addressing methane issues could lead to many climate benefits quickly. Leaks, emissions, venting, incomplete combustion – these are just a few problems that offer plenty of room for improvement. If only we would use technologies we have at hand, we could significantly increase our current methane management efficiency. This would take us a long way towards meeting our coveted 2°C objective. Even more compelling is the fact that there are enormous economic benefits from recovering methane and using it commercially. It is indeed win-win.

In UNECE, we offer an intergovernmental platform where member States come together to develop standards, guidelines, norms and best practices on technical issues ranging from road signals and vehicle regulations to energy efficient housing and meat standards. All of it in support of sustainable development. Our 56 member countries stretch from the US and Canada to Russia and Tajikistan, from Finland and Iceland to Turkey and Israel. We have seventy years of experience in bringing countries together, even in times of political tensions, to develop norms, standards and conventions in multiple fields ranging from economic integration, to transport, to trade, forestry and of course to environmental policy and sustainable energy. We host the Air Convention, the most successful international agreement to tackle air pollution in order to improve the health of our citizens and fight climate change.

It is also the only internationally legally binding agreement to tackle short lived climate pollutants.

It is our firm belief that cooperation on technical issues, where politics does not enter into the discussion too deeply, is a great way to achieve economic integration and cooperation. And this in turn can lead to peace and prosperity. We are proud of the positive effect that our work has on the daily lives of people around the world. In fact, we serve over 1 billion 270 million people to ensure their wellbeing. It is not an exaggeration to say that the scope and impact of our work is global.

UNECE's energy work is designed to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all and to help reduce the carbon footprint of the energy sector. We help countries to develop standards and best practices in energy efficiency, renewable energy, resource classification, natural gas, clean electricity, and coal mine methane. We promote and facilitate international policy dialogue and cooperation among governments, private companies, academia, and civil society.

And we are very proud of our work on methane management. It has helped to save the lives of coal mine workers. It can help to save the planet from climate change.

I said before that we must all work together to reach the future we want. That is why I am very pleased to be here today to reconfirm the long-standing partnership between UNECE and the Global Methane Initiative.

UNECE is privileged to be one of GMI's partners. We have a long history of common projects and information exchange. Our cooperation has produced tangible impacts in the coal sector, and increasingly also in gas. In the area of coal, we have worked with GMI from the moment it was launched. Our Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane has benefitted enormously from the engagement of a broad community of experts in our best practice guidance on managing methane in coal mines. That work has generated a lot of enthusiasm, and we are moving forward with international centres of excellence and extended best

practice guidance on coal mine methane.

In the area of natural gas, while our partnership is more recent, it is equally promising and already quite fruitful. One of the key tasks before our Group of Experts on Gas is to address the issues of leaks in the gas system, from source to use. We are engaged with GMI and with the Climate and Clean Air Coalition, to develop best practices for abatement, and also for monitoring and reporting. A series of meetings with all stakeholders is taking place on the outskirts of this meeting to advance that work.

Having worked together for over a decade, we warmly welcome the closer collaboration and partnership in our respective methane-related activities. We can help capture the key knowledge you have, channel it into the UN and promote and disseminate it worldwide. The result will be a stronger partnership, a better use of resources, and concrete outcomes – really moving ahead on methane-related issues.

Methane management in extractive industries is a higher level, broader topic that is being explored by a number of actors. The timing of a tighter bond with GMI could not be better. We should work together and explore methane management methods and technologies along the whole value chain, in all relevant extractive industries, and among all stakeholders. We are well aware of the magnitude of the task. To complete it, we need a wide diversity of expertise. Therefore, rather than trying to cope with such a challenge all by ourselves, we wish to work together with the best people, the best experts. In this context, we could not think of a better partner than GMI.

The fruitful cooperation between GMI and UNECE leaves me to believe that common work to achieve environmental and sustainable development goals is not only possible, but worthwhile. Reinforcing the partnership between GMI, CCAC and UNECE will bring added value to all organizations, and thus many tangible benefits to us all. And it will help us reach the Sustainable Development Goals and implement the Paris Climate Agreement.

Thank you.
