

Opening Ceremony of International Centre of Excellence on Coal Mine Methane in China

Opening Speech

Mr. Scott Foster, Director, Sustainable Energy Division, UNECE

Your excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be here today to join you for the official opening of the International Centre of Excellence. I would like to thank our host, the Shanxi Coking Coal Company, for inviting UNECE, for inviting me, to join you for the opening of the Centre. We are delighted at our partnership with the Shanxi Coking Coal Company for a number of reasons.

- The company is the perfect partner for the UN to disseminate best practices for managing methane accumulations in coal mines in the region.
- You are the leading coking coal mining group in China and are able to disseminate these practices not only in your own facilities but also through the industry in China and throughout the region.
- The opportunity to disseminate the best practice guidance in the Asia-Pacific region is an opportunity to minimize the accumulation of methane in operating coal mines in a significant way.
- The benefits are well understood – saving lives and saving the whole social fabric of mining communities is extraordinary.
- Add to that the opportunity to reduce emissions of methane that have a much greater greenhouse forcing effect than CO₂.

- Finally, recovering the methane and putting it to uses such as power generation enhances the contribution that fossil fuels makes to the economy while reducing their environmental footprint.

The clear benefits of managing the accumulation of methane in coal mines is the reason that the UN's Economic and Social Council called for global dissemination of the best practice guidance. As Shanxi Coking Coal Company moves forward with the International Centre of Excellence and as both UNECE and UN ESCAP extend our collaboration on fossil energy, the benefits of our extended collaboration will be increasingly apparent.

The members of our Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane have worked for many years to develop the Best Practice Guidance, and they continue to work both on subjects that are not addressed in the current document and on case studies on the range of mines and coal types. I would like to acknowledge the contributions and leadership of Mr. Ray Pilcher, our chair, Ms. Felicia Ruiz of the US Environmental Protection Agency that has funded this work, and Mr. David Creedy, one of the leading experts in this area.

The development of the International Centre of Excellence here in China and the development of an International Centre of Excellence in Katowice, Poland set the stage for a string of centres around the world that can reinforce one another. Their work will add to the growing volume of information and experience, which will enhance results around the world. That is the objective. UNECE would like to thank the Government of China for supporting this initiative, and we would like to thank China Mining

Forum for hosting this launch during its globally renowned Forum. Both gestures serve to highlight the benefits that applying the Best Practice Guidance can bring.

It is my great personal pleasure to be with you today, and I would like to congratulate you on this important and successful step.