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**Economic Commission for Europe****Committee on Sustainable Energy****Group of Experts on Gas****Seventh session**

Geneva, 22-25 September 2020

**Report of the Group of Experts on Gas****I. Introduction**

1. The seventh session of the Group of Experts was held for one day during 22-25 September 2020, as a hybrid in-person/virtual event in three segments: on 22 September (Opening and Adoption of the agenda), on 23 September (Workshop: “Decarbonization through harnessing synergies between renewable electricity and gas”, organized together with the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy) and on 25 September (Election of officers, and all other items of the agenda).
2. This report summarizes the discussions of the Group of Experts at its seventh 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 meetings of the Groups of Experts reporting to the Committee on Sustainable Energy held during the period 22-25 September 2020 were attended by more than 350 experts from the following United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) member States: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Malta, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, and Uzbekistan.
4. Experts from Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Cameroon, Chad, the People’s Republic of China, Colombia, Comoros, Ecuador, Egypt, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Namibia, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Thailand, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania and Yemen participated under Article 11 of the Commission’s Terms of Reference.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=55294>.

5. Representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UNEP-DTU Partnership, Copenhagen Centre on Energy Efficiency, World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) attended. The European Union was represented. Representatives from the European Commission (EC), from the EC Directorate-General (D.G.) for Energy, D.G. for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, and D.G. Joint Research Centre, and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) RawMaterials also participated.

6. Representatives of the following organizations participated: Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia (CCOP), EuroGeoSurveys (EGS), International Energy Agency (IEA), and International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA).

7. The meeting also was attended by representatives of non-governmental organizations, academia and the private sector, as well as by independent experts.

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

8. The Group of Experts noted that the unprecedented circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic had resulted in the seventh session being postponed from March 2020 to 22-25 September and in a different and reduced format, in collaboration with the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy. The Expert Group decided to postpone discussions on agenda items 5, 8 and 10 to the eighth session and adopted a modified agenda (ECE/ENERGY/GE.8/2020/1).

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

9. The Group of Experts elected a new Bureau to serve for a term of two years (starting from the close of the seventh session on 25 September 2020). The members are: Mr. Francisco de la Flor (Spain) as Chair and Mr Florian Marko (Austria), Mr. Loghman Damirli (Azerbaijan), Mr. Boris Maksijan (Croatia), Mr. Uwe Wetzel (Germany), Mr. Torstein Indrebø (Norway), Mr. Dmitriy Shvedov, (Russian Federation), Ms. Denise Mulholland (United States), and Mr. Luis Bertran (International Gas Union) as Vice-Chairs.

### **V. Activities and priorities of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and its Executive Committee (agenda item 4)**

10. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation that the Committee on Sustainable Energy had extended Group's mandate until 31 December 2021 and approved its 2020-2021 work plan, as presented in ECE/ENERGY/2019/10.

### **VI. Decarbonization (agenda item 6)**

11. Recognizing the drive towards decarbonization and electrification of the end-use, the Group of Experts reminded that that increasingly decarbonized gaseous fuels would remain the key energy vector for the foreseeable future.

12. The Group of Experts concluded that the synergies between renewable energies (electricity and gas) could be harnessed by utilizing the gas infrastructure as the backbone of a low-carbon energy system. With that in mind, the Group of Experts on Gas and the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy organized on 23 September 2020 a joint workshop that discussed policies that accelerate uptake of renewable, decarbonized and low- and zero-carbon gases in the ECE region.



13. The Group of Experts thanked the World Energy Council for co-organizing the Hydrogen Innovation Forum on 25 March 2020 in Geneva. The Group of Experts concluded that the first practical step was developing a catalogue/inventory of regulations and standards on how hydrogen—pure or mixed with methane—could be injected into pipelines or used for various mobility, industrial and residential applications within and beyond the ECE region.

14. The Group of Experts offered to facilitate international and cross-sectoral collaboration that increases awareness and public acceptability of hydrogen and accelerates the transition towards a future hydrogen economy in the ECE region and beyond.

15. The Group of Experts recognized the critical role of gas in the decarbonisation of the energy sector and achievement of carbon neutrality by 2050. With that in mind, the Group of Experts acknowledged that the concept of gas should be broader and include not only natural gas but also low-carbon, decarbonized and renewables gases. The technological development, together with the economies of scale will foster the use of progressively more decarbonized and renewable gases. The combination of natural gas and carbon capture (use) and storage CC(U)S could lead to the same desired outcomes.

16. The Group of Experts further acknowledged that among the gases that could have a significant contribution are the biogas/biomethane and hydrogen. Biogas/biomethane brings additional benefits due to its relationship with the circular and rural economy and the valuation of waste. Hydrogen would also progressively increase its contribution, with all potential sources of hydrogen production maintained.

17. The Group of Experts concluded that gas infrastructure (existing and new), notably transmission, distribution and underground storage, but also facilities to manage liquefied gases, is the backbone of the future low-carbon energy system that contributes cost-efficiently to the overall decarbonisation.

18. The Group of Experts concluded that a future decarbonized energy system could be an optimal combination of “electrons and molecules”, in which the electricity and gas sub-systems are progressively more interlinked, increasing the share of renewable energy, either as electricity or as gas.

19. The Group of Experts on Gas and the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy offered support to ECE member States to disseminate best practices in the achievement of the interlinked model and to develop effective policies to support, when necessary, the technological developments and to accelerate the decarbonisation of the energy system.

## **VII. Gas value chain: gas for transport and other end-uses (agenda item 7)**

20. The Group of Experts concluded that switching to compressed or liquefied natural gas (CNG or LNG) from petrol and, particularly, from diesel, represents the most realistic pathway to reducing pollution from road and maritime transport. The Group of Experts offered to assist interested member States in improving their capacity to reap environmental and economic benefits of natural gas vehicles in road and maritime transport.

21. The Group of Experts welcomed the start in June 2020 of the extrabudgetary project “Improving capacities of the ECE member States to decarbonize the transport sector”. The Group of Experts noted that the project will enhance the capacity of ECE member States to develop infrastructure for affordable, sustainable and clean natural gas, and help them harness the benefits of natural gas in transportation, as a viable low-carbon alternative fuelling options.

22. The Group of Experts took note of the dialogue “99 minutes of LNG - trends, developments, and innovative end-uses” held on 25 June 2020. The online dialogue<sup>2</sup> explored the current state of LNG supply and demand, imports and exports, and prices, and discussed the impact of COVID-19 pandemics. Participants learned about several new opportunities

<sup>2</sup> Summary and presentations available at: <https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=55304>.

for LNG in water and road transport, electricity and heat generation, and other innovative end-uses.

### **VIII. Update on implementation of the work plan for 2020-2021 and the preparation of the work plan for 2022-2023 (agenda item 9)**

23. The Group welcomed the progress in the implementation of its 2020-2021 workplan (ECE/ENERGY/2019/10), despite the difficulties caused by the pandemic.

24. The Group requested that the Bureau, in cooperation with the secretariat, start preparations for the 2022-2023 work plan and present a draft for discussion by the Group of Experts at its 2021 annual session.

### **IX. Preparations for the eighth session of the Group of Experts on Gas (agenda item 11)**

25. The Group of Experts recommended that the eighth session of the Group of Experts be held in Spring 2021 in Geneva.

### **X. Adoption of the report and close of the meeting (agenda item 14)**

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

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