**GECF 3rd Annual Workshop on Environmental Advantage of Natural Gas**

**Doha, Qatar – 15 December 2020:**As the world gets increasingly committed to limiting global warming to well below 2C degrees, the success of various initiatives to decarbonise natural gas will be key to ensure that this fastest growing and the cleanest hydrocarbon fuel remains prevailing in the future energy mix, participants of a recently-held Workshop on Environmental Advantages of Natural Gas heard.

Organised by the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF), the 3rd annual edition of the workshop was held virtually and in the backdrop of COVID-19 pandemic when countries are juxtaposing between the need to restore economies and implement environmental safeguards. Increasing the number of participants. The importance of environmental protection in energy systems was evident in the workshop’s size, whose participants have been increasing in numbers since the first edition.

The event was opened by the Secretary General of the Forum, HE Yury Sentyurin, who outlined the ongoing efforts of the GECF Secretariat to monitor climate actions and initiatives, assess their impact on energy and gas markets and highlight the inherent features of natural gas that make this energy source compatible with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and Paris Agreement provisions.

The GECF is working with the most reputable international institutions such as the UNFCCC, UNECE, UNESCO, G20, BRICS in a broad dialogue on the essential role of natural gas in achieving the ambitious targets.

According to him, the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a large debate on the energy and climate policy orientations that will unfold in the future. “The world hopes to maintain emissions on a decreasing trend through sustainable means with activities running and economic prosperity on track. That is where natural gas is supporting nations globally.”

“Although there is a consensus around the need to achieve a transition towards more efficient, less carbon-intensive and sustainable energy systems, countries need to consider energy options that allow for achieving the appropriate balance between environmental and climate-related commitments on one side, and social and economic progress on the other side,” added HE Sentyurin.

The welcoming remarks were followed by Head of the GECF’s Energy Economics and Forecasting Department, Mr Dmitry Sokolov, who presented the prospects for energy-related CO2 emissions in the 2020 edition of the Global Gas Outlook 2050. This landmark annual publication is based on the most comprehensive modelling tool available today – the GECF Global Gas Model – and allows the Secretariat to provide energy balances with a full forecast on energy-related emissions for all energy sectors up to 2050.

“Countries that adopted natural gas immediately benefitted from a reduction of emissions. For 2020, we of course understand that reduction of CO2 emission is mostly due to the slowdown of the global economy, but this process is also due to the effect of penetration of more natural gas into the global economy,” said Mr Sokolov.

“However, any progress (on emissions) between 2010 and 2019 is not enough to meet the targets of the Paris Agreement and more and more efforts are needed to reach the UN SDGs”. The Secretariat official also added, that “switching from coal-to-gas, and oil-to-gas in transport, for instance, will allow the world to significantly reduce CO2 emissions on a global scale.”

The subject of how to decarbonise natural gas and make it a zero-emission source of energy was also tackled by the Vice President of Wood Mackenzie’s Global Gas Analysis, Mr Massimo Di Odoardo, who outlined the various challenges and options that different players are currently exploring.

“2020 will be remembered as the year when China, Japan and South Korea have pledged to achieve a carbon neutral energy system, following announcement from the UK and the E.U. in 2019. Those countries together represent about a quarter of global gas demand,” noted Mr Di Odoardo.

“With COP26 in Glasgow scheduled for November next year, others might follow suit. A new, more ambitious climate change goal might well be on the horizon, perhaps supported by a new Biden (the U.S. President-elect) administration.”

It should be noted that net-zero emissions and carbon-neutral system don’t mean that fossil fuels, including gas, will cease to exists to ensure zero greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs). Carbon sinks, including carbon capture and sequestration, and carbon offsets, will be key to achieve carbon neutrality.

“But obviously, renewables and other emerging zero and low-carbon energy, including hydrogen, will gain traction, providing substantial downside risk to natural gas in the long term,” he added.

According to him, decarbonising natural gas is gaining momentum and companies are exploring alternative options, including carbon offsets in the LNG market, as evidenced by the recent announcement by Qatar Petroleum in its sales agreement with Singapore’s Pavilion Energy.

“Consequently, decarbonising natural gas is becoming increasingly important for the gas industry. The resilience of natural gas in the energy mix will depends on success of decarbonising it,” concluded Mr Di Odoardo.

The final speaker of the workshop, the Policy and Environment Analyst at the GECF, Mr Sid-Ahmad Hamdani, shared key insights from the perspective of developing an Energy Sustainability Index (ESI).

An ESI aggregates several indicators on different energy-sustainability dimensions. It allows ranking of countries according to the sustainability of their energy systems and assesses the position of natural gas in different countries not only on the environmental dimension, but also through considering other criteria including energy access, competitiveness and affordability.

According to the expert, the framework for GECF’s ESI takes into consideration six criteria: access to modern energy, availability and reliability of supply, affordability and competitiveness, reduction of GHGs, pollution mitigation from energy-related activities, and cooperation between energy stakeholders.

“A balanced energy solution is one that enables a stable and synchronised progress of all these criteria. This is why we want to assess and score different energy options based on these criteria,” noted Mr Hamdani.

The first GECF Workshop on the Environmental Advantages of Natural Gas was held in Sabetta, Russia in 2018, whilst the 2nd edition of this important dialogue took place in Madrid, Spain in 2019 on the sidelines of COP25.

The GECF is an active voice in the area of climate activism. The coalition of 20 of the leading gas producing nations has launched an Environmental Knowledge and Solutions initiative, with an aim to share best practices, acquire knowledge, and bring solutions to meet the environmental challenges of today and tomorrow. Last week, the GECF entered a landmark MoU with UNESCO to bring these body of knowledge and solutions to the world’s populations. A day prior to the workshop, the Forum successfully organised a (virtual) event on Blue Hydrogen Strategy, which is said to be the next frontier in the world’s drive to achieve carbon neutrality.

The GECF Secretary General, once again, called on all stakeholders to work together in ensuring that an economic recovery doesn’t derail any progress on environmental protection.

“According to the latest edition of the Global Gas Outlook 2050 that will be launched in February 2021, energy-related CO2 emissions are expected to increase in 2021 and 2022. They will exhibit moderate growth after 2022 and reach a plateau at around 33.7 GtCO2 over the 2030-2050 period,” he said.

These emissions are anticipated to be lower than the levels projected in 2018 and 2019, due to COVID-19-led economic slowdown and its long-term effect on the global economic recovery.

**“**The affordability and the competitiveness of natural gas, together with the resilience of the gas exporters, particularly from the GECF community, will play a fundamental role in allowing countries to secure the energy they need to speed up their economic engines whilst protecting their precious environment,” concluded HE Sentyurin.

More information about the climate change actions of the GECF is available on www.gecf.org

**Photocaption: (Top) HE Sentyurin, (L-R) Mr Di Odoardo, Mr Sokolov, and Mr Hamdani**

*Ends*

**For further information, kindly contact:**

Nadezhda M. Lyubovskaya

+974 3337 3641

nadezhda.lyubovskaya@gecf.org

Sarmad Qazi

+974 5546 8758

sarmad.qazi@gecf.org

**About Gas Exporting Countries Forum:**

Gas Exporting Countries Forum is an international governmental organisation of 20 Member Countries – Algeria, Bolivia, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Iran, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Russia, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela, Angola, Azerbaijan, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Norway, Oman, Peru, and the United Arab Emirates, which jointly control 71% of the proven gas reserves, 45% of its marketed production, 53% of pipeline, and 60% of LNG exports across the globe. It is headquartered in Doha, Qatar.

Being a foremost energy association, officially established in 2008, the GECF has recorded notable milestones in its evolution and remains committed to supporting its Member Countries in the pursuit of global energy security and meeting the world’s growing energy demand, while proving to be reliable suppliers of natural gas – a prominent contributor in the global pursuit towards net-zero emissions energy systems and attainment of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

The Forum provides granular, scientifically based insights into the state of natural gas based on the diverse variety of the instruments and deliverables such as the Gas Research Institute, the GECF Global Gas Model – now with elements of artificial intelligence and digital technologies, Global Gas Outlook 2050, Annual Short-Term Gas Market Report, Monthly Gas Market Report, Special Envoys on Data and Statistics, Data Exchange Mechanism, the Short-, Medium-, and Long-Term Gas Market Reviews, and Monthly, Quarterly, and Annual Statistical Bulletins.

GECF increasingly engages with UN agencies, the G20 Ministerial Meeting on Energy Transitions and Global Environment for Sustainable growth, ASEAN, EEC, OPEC, OAPEC, APPO, IEF, IEA, IRENA, OLADE, IGU, other peers, and regional entities, as well as maintains strategic multifaceted dialogue amongst natural gas producers and consumers. For more information visit www.gecf.org

##