

**Euro-Mashreq Gas Markets Seminar
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Damascus, Syria**

**WELCOME ADDRESS BY
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Your Excellencies, Honourable Guests and Colleagues,

- It is a great pleasure to be here in Damascus today at our Seminar focusing on the Euro-Mashreq gas market. Please allow me to initially express my sincere gratitude to H.E. Soufian Allao, Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources of Syria and the kind support of the Syrian government for hosting this event.
- I would also like to thank the European Commission for its generous assistance and recognition of the importance of today's seminar. I also cannot fail to mention our very kind sponsors, Shell and Total, and of course the Euro-Arab Mashreq Gas Co-Operation Center, all of whom have played a central role in allowing this seminar to take place.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

- For many years the Energy Charter has formed the basis for cooperation in the energy sector in the greater Euro-Asian landmass. The founding fathers of the Energy Charter were able to overcome previous economic divisions, thereby giving birth to a process establishing a commonly accepted foundation for energy relations amongst 51 countries.
- This process was based upon a declaration of political commitment to several core principles, namely:
 1. Open and competitive energy markets
 2. Non-discrimination amongst participants
 3. Respect for state sovereignty over national resources

4. Creating the necessary conditions to stimulate energy investments
 5. Due consideration to the environment and efficient use of energy
- Above all, it aimed to encourage the development of national and regional energy markets as a means of striving towards sustainable development. Our member states signed the Energy Charter Treaty of 1994, which entered into full legal force in 1998. The Treaty has therefore become the legal framework of the Charter process. Today, the provisions of the Treaty – which range in coverage from protecting energy investments to improving energy efficiency – comprise the only truly multilateral legal instrument working to strengthen the rule of law on energy issues.
 - Much has been achieved within our constituency since the Energy Charter first appeared as a primary institutional driver for the economic development of Eurasia. The energy market of this important global region has become increasingly inter-dependent, generating greater volumes of investment and trade for the benefit of all concerned.
 - In addition to these positive results, it is now our intention to facilitate an energy dialogue between the key energy stakeholders in other important regions, notably in the Mashreq.
 - Indeed, when the EU Commission approached our Secretariat to organize today's seminar, we embraced this opportunity with open arms. For the Energy Charter, this meeting provides an excellent opportunity to start afresh, to re-ignite the process of engagement and dialogue with all of you present here today. And this is in no small part due to my firm belief that the benefits of the Energy Charter's experience in Eurasia can be extended to the Mashreq.
 - There is little doubt in my mind that the development of a competitive gas market in the Mashreq is of vital importance to all of us participating in this seminar. I am also convinced that the emergence of a new gas supply route through the Mashreq has the potential to play a vital role in the fulfillment of international energy security. It

would also add further impetus in spreading economic prosperity in the Mashreq region.

- The old cliché – of security in diversity – is just as important today as it has ever been in the past. This applies particularly to Europe due to its growing dependence on imported energy and the importance it places on diversification of supply. If we work together today, our regions can but benefit by putting to rest energy security concerns of tomorrow.
- I must say that it is very impressive to see such a qualified faculty of speakers gathered here in Damascus today. This is reflective of the willingness of the European Union and the Arab Mashreq nations to work together for the integration of the gas markets of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Syria.
- I hope that by the end of today's meeting we will have reached some common understanding as to how we can take the practical steps necessary in order to move forward with this substantial project.
- However, I should add that the Energy Charter Secretariat sees today's seminar as merely the beginning of our combined efforts towards the realization of these strategic objectives. Today provides us with a fresh opportunity to embark upon a long process which will not be devoid of challenges to be encountered along the way.
- The Energy Charter is a dynamic concept and open to co-operation with all interested parties. As we strive together to build a competitive regional gas market in the Mashreq, please consider the experience and instruments of the Energy Charter to be at your disposal.

I thank you for your attention.