FOURTH IEF ENERGY LECTURE
by Ambassador Andre Mernier
Secretary General of the Energy Charter
IEF Secretariat Headquarters
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
6 March 2007

Welcoming remarks

by Ambassador Arne Walther
Secretary General, IEF

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me, on behalf of the IEF Secretariat, to welcome you to our Headquarters for the 4th IEF Energy Lecture. We are honoured to have with us today the Secretary General of the Energy Charter, H.E. Ambassador Andre Mernier, who will share his Energy Charter perspectives on "International Energy Security".

The Energy Charter is a unique instrument for international energy co-operation signed by 51 energy producing, transit and consuming countries in Europe and Asia. At a time when energy security tops the political agenda worldwide, we expect energy trade to increase substantially in the years ahead. This underscores the need for conducive mechanisms of international co-operation, development of cross-border infrastructure as well as common and transparent rules to ensure the reliability of energy flows. The Energy Charter, signed in 1994 and entering into force four years later, is one such mechanism of international energy co-operation that recognizes energy interdependencies among nations.

Ambassador Mernier will speak on the background for the Energy Charter and recent developments. He will examine the balance that the Energy Charter Treaty strikes between the interests of energy producing and consuming countries. Touching upon the current interest from non-signatories in accession to this legally binding framework for energy cooperation, he will also address the relationship between the Energy Charter and key constituent members, notably the EU, Russia, Japan, Turkey and the countries of the Caspian region. He will highlight how also the Gulf region might benefit from a closer association with the Energy Charter Framework.

Ambassador Andre Mernier has a distinguished career in the Belgian Foreign Service behind him, having among other positions served as Ambassador in Moscow, Geneva and Seoul. He was Head of Energy Services in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs before assuming his present position as elected Secretary General of the Energy Charter Secretariat in January 2006,

Before giving the floor to Ambassador Mernier, let me just give a brief update on our IEF activities and alert you to some events the next two months.

The IEF in 2007

First of all, just a few weeks ago, we were honoured to have the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Norwegian Parliament give the 3rd IEF Lecture on links between Foreign Policy and Energy Policy. Mr Akselsen was well positioned to do so, having himself served as energy minister before assuming his present position in Parliament. Let me thank many of those present today for coming also last time. His speech is on our website and my staff can provide you with paper copies as well.

As Ambassadors will know, our Programme of Work and Budget for this year was approved two weeks ago and sent to Ministers requesting the annual financial contributions of their countries to our activity this year. We have had a very prompt transfer of funds already from Italy, the U.A.E. Qatar and Finland. We hope of course to have many early transfers from others as well in the coming weeks.

As in preceding years, the Programme of Work focuses on the three pillars of activity as earlier endorsed by Ministers. The pillars are:

Support to and follow-up of the IEF Ministerials

The Secretariat will be hosting here in late April a meeting of the "Informal Support Group of Countries" that will advise on the development of themes for the 11th IEF in Rome in April 2008, hosted by Italy and co-hosted by India and Mexico. The Informal Support Group includes not only member countries of the Executive Board of the Secretariat, but is also open for other countries that would want to play an active role in preparing the next Ministerial.

Co-ordination of the Joint Oil Data Initiative

The Secretariat organized its second regional JODI training session, this time for Sub-Saharan African countries and inaugurated by the Minister for Mineral Resources and Energy of South Africa, in Johannesburg on 30 January to 1 February. Additional regional workshops are envisaged later this year for North African and Middle East countries as well as for Caspian countries.

We are following up the 6th International JODI Conference hosted by the Secretariat in Riyadh last November and the call by IEF Ministers as well as G8 Heads of Government to improve the quality of data submitted to JODI and expand its coverage. The Secretariat will continue to coordinate JODI activities and manage the JODI World database. Our Energy Director Said Nachet chairs inter-organizational meetings with partners APEC, Eurostat, IEA, OLADE, OPEC and UN, the first of which took place last month.

Thanks to a generous financial grant from Norway to promote JODI among developing countries, we can now offer scholarships to officials from developing countries to work with us at the Secretariat for shorter periods of time to further familiarize themselves with JODI. This special grant comes over and above Norway's regular annual financial contribution to the Secretariat.

Facilitating other platforms for dialogue.

IEF Energy Lectures is one such platform. Our newsletter, where Ministers carry forward the dialogue by contributing special policy articles of topical interest, is another. Ambassador Mernier has himself contributed an article on the Energy Charter last year. The next issue will be sent to you in a couple of weeks.

Secretary General Mernier and I will, with our staff, later today bilaterally discuss how our two Secretariats can further co-operate in promoting international energy dialogue and co-operation.

Three weeks from now, the IEF Secretariat and Offshore Mediterranean Conference will jointly organizing the opening plenary session of Ministers of the region and CEOs, inaugurated by the Minister of Economic Development of Italy, on the "Mediterranean Dimension of Global Energy Security" at the 8th OMC in Ravenna, Italy. The event will provide a useful contact point with industry as we prepare for the 11th IEF and 3rd IEBF in Rome.

And we are facilitating the 2nd Roundtable of Asian Ministers on Regional Petroleum Co-operation that Saudi Arabia will host, and Japan co-host, in Riyadh in May. It will gather Ministers of the principal petroleum-importing countries of East and South Asia and Ministers of the West Asian (Gulf) petroleum-exporting countries and highlight the Asian dimension of the global producer-consumer dialogue.

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May I, in conclusion, introduce a new senior staff member of the Secretariat, Mr. Saleh Agala, who has been seconded by the Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources of Saudi Arabia on a temporary basis up to June to assist us as Acting Director for Finance and Administration. Mr. Agala worked with us for a few months setting up the Secretariat from December 2003 and has later also served as one of Saudi Arabia's members of our Executive Board.

Our next event will be an expert presentation of OPEC's Global Oil Outlook by the Head of their Research Division Dr. Hasan Qabazard on 3 April.

With these words, it is my great pleasure and honour to give the floor to my colleague and good friend Ambassador Mernier.