International Energy Charter Formally Approved as an Observer to Economic Cooperation Organisation

On February 28, 2017, the International Energy Charter was formally approved as an Observer of the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) at the 22nd Council of Ministers (COM) meeting of the ECO states, which took place in Islamabad, Pakistan. International Energy Charter observership of ECO follows the granting of reciprocal observer status to ECO, which was approved at the 27th Energy Charter Conference in Tokyo on November 26-27 of last year. International Energy Charter-ECO reciprocal observer status formal approvals come as a result of mutually beneficial and practical cooperation initiatives that have been developed by the Secretariats of both organisations during 2016.

SECRETARY GENERAL’S ACTIVITIES

Vice Chairman of the Energy Charter Conference, Special Representative for Energy Security Ministry of Foreign Affairs Romania, Ambassador Mihnea Constantinescu, visits the Secretariat

As of 01 January 2017, Ambassador Mihnea Constantinescu has started his service as Vice Chairman of the Energy Charter Conference. The Vice Chairman was met by Energy Charter Secretary General Dr Urban Rusnák and the topic of conversation revolved around the role that Romania will play in 2018 as the country will assume the Chairmanship of the Energy Charter Conference. Ambassador Mihnea Constantinescu confirmed Romania’s commitment to its Chairmanship.

Newly Appointed Ambassador of Afghanistan Visits the Energy Charter Secretariat in Brussels

On 22 February 2017 His Excellency Wali Monawar, the new Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the Kingdom of Belgium was welcomed by Energy Charter Secretary General Dr Urban Rusnák. The meeting focused on a number of matters, mostly in the context of Afghanistan, its energy security and transition to peace.
Participants of the meeting discussed Afghanistan’s recent accession to the Energy Charter Treaty, which can be regarded as a positive factor with potential to streamlining Afghanistan’s goals and aspirations from the energy perspective. The Ambassador has praised the Energy Charter’s efforts in the upcoming hosting of Secondees from the government sector of Afghanistan in the framework of the horizontal risk assessment report.

**Ambassadors of Five Central Asian States Discuss Cooperation Under the Auspices of the Energy Charter**

On 23 February 2017 in Brussels, the Energy Charter Secretary General Dr Urban Rusnák hosted an informal working lunch with the Ambassadors of five Central Asian states. The discussion highlighted the cooperation efforts between them and the EU in matters of energy. The discussion focused on further joint steps to be taken by the Energy Charter Secretariat and the Central Asian states in identifying the modalities and specifics of assistance, which the Secretariat could render to these states in the energy sector. Participants reiterated the need for knowledge sharing and expertise, which the EU could extend by making use of the Energy Charter acting both as a platform and a vehicle, focusing on specific areas of energy development.

**The Ambassador of Yemen Meets Energy Charter Secretary General**

On 23 February 2017 H.E. Ambassador Mohamed Taha Mustafa met with Energy Charter Secretary General Dr Urban Rusnák in Brussels to discuss the Ratification of the Energy Charter Treaty by the Republic of Yemen. Yemen, a signatory of the International Energy Charter, is finalising the last stage of the ratification process for its accession to the Energy Charter Treaty. The Government officially approved accession to the Treaty in November 2016 and the Ambassador informed the Secretary General that Yemen is expected to become a Contracting Party in 2017. Ambassador Taha Mustafa also welcomed the proposal from the Secretariat to provide technical assistance and capacity building programs for Yemen in the framework of post conflict reconstruction of the energy infrastructure. The Secretariat will continue assisting Yemen in its next procedural steps to ratify the Energy Charter Treaty.

**Iranian Representatives Visit the Energy Charter Secretariat**

On 24 February 2017, a delegation of Iranian representatives comprised of government, industry and academia visited the Energy Charter Secretariat in
Brussels in order to explore avenues of cooperation between Iran and the International Energy Charter. The Iranian delegation was composed of Mr M.A. Farahnakian, Advisor of the Deputy Minister for Power & Energy Affairs, Mr Mahmood Khaghani, Advisor at the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines & Agriculture, and Mr S. Hossein Iranmanesh, Vice President of the Research Institute for Energy Management and Planning. The role of the International Energy Charter to de-politicise the energy sector was emphasised. Energy efficiency was discussed as another area of great interest. The Iranian delegation recognised the role of the International Energy Charter to inspire and develop polices and legislation for energy market reform.

**ENERGY CHARTER SECRETARIAT’S OTHER ACTIVITIES & EVENTS**

*The International Energy Charter Participates in the Round Table Discussion Hosted by the European Parliament on “EU – Central Asia Relations”*

On 7 February 2017, Energy Charter Secretary General Dr Urban Rusnák and Transit Expert Mr Kanat Botbaev, attended a round table discussion at the European Parliament in Brussels on “EU–Central Asia Relations: Exploring New Potential.” The round table was hosted and moderated by Mr Eduard Kukan, Member of the European Parliament. Invited guests included Mr Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President of the European Commission, Mr Peter Burian, EU Special Representative for Central Asia, and Mr Tavo Klaar, European External Action Service. The discussion centred on the relevance of the EU Strategy for Central Asia and the strategic interests of the EU in the region. Dr Rusnák stressed the role of the International Energy Charter as an instrument to provide a common platform for energy cooperation between EU member states and countries of Central Asia.

*13th Meeting on Regional Energy Cooperation Asia (RECA) Gets Underway In Hong Kong*

The International Energy Charter in cooperation with the Chinese University of Hong Kong and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS RECAP Hong Kong) organised the 13th Regional Energy Cooperation in Asia (RECA) meeting (23–25 February 2017) on the topic of “Regulation of Energy Investments along the “Belt and Road” in Hong Kong. Energy Charter Assistant Secretary General Dr Masami Nakata, delivered a speech in the opening session, stressing the role of the International Energy Charter in promoting multilateral energy cooperation and its relevance for the objectives of the “Belt and Road” strategy. Dr Alejandro Carballo Leyda, Legal Counsel, and Mr Kanat Botbaev, Transit expert, contributed to various sessions of the conference and panel discussions on multilateral frameworks for energy cooperation, dispute resolution and energy transit.
A new International Energy Charter open to Africa

By Dr Ernesto Bonafé, Expert on Regulation & Coordinator for Expansion, Energy Charter Secretariat

World-wide signatories of the 2015 International Energy Charter include an increasing number of countries and regions from the African continent. Why a new International Energy Charter? Why is it relevant for Africa? The goal is to streamline and empower countries to participate in the global energy architecture. The specific added value of the International Energy Charter is to enhance the rule of law at a global level in order to mobilise energy investment that is necessary to tackle global challenges, such as universal energy access and climate change mitigation. Universal principles usually emerge in a certain period of time, in a given geographical area and under particular circumstances. Then those principles spread across the world due to their inherent value. This is the story of the Energy Charter Process, which started as a Eurasian initiative after the fall of the Berlin Wall and as an opportunity for long-term and stable cooperation in energy between the East and the West. The 1991 European Energy Charter, an initial political declaration, led to the 1994 Energy Charter Treaty, a legally binding agreement which is still in force and acting as a legal basis to settle conflicts and ensure open, secure, and sustainable energy. The energy sector is experiencing a huge transformation. While the energy sector gets restructured, boundaries broaden and challenges become global, the need for common principles to secure investment and trade remains unchanged. Those principles are to be defined, owned and implemented by the largest possible number of countries. This is the essence of the 2015 International Energy Charter, which has so far 80 signatories from all continents, enabling countries and regional integration organisations to reinforce their political will to create an investment climate favorable to mobilise private investors towards the achievement of the UNFCCC Paris Agreement, the universal energy access as set out in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the African Union Agenda 2063. The 2015 International Energy Charter has no legal nor financial implications. Instead, it is an international benchmark to mobilise private investment towards a sustainable energy future underpinned by the rule of law. So far it has been signed by ten African countries, Benin, Burundi, Chad, Mauritania, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Swaziland, Tanzania and Uganda, and four regional organisations, the East African Community, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Economic Community of Western African States and the G5 Sahel. The 2015 International Energy Charter is technological-neutral and has a broad approach covering the whole energy sector. Within the respect of national sovereignty, it brings together developed and developing countries, energy producing, consuming and transit countries as well as countries facing the challenge of universal energy access. By taking part and signing the 2015 International Energy Charter, African countries and regional organisations are not only invited to benefit from international experiences and lessons learned on creating market-oriented reforms in the energy sector, but they are also encouraged to play an active role in designing the global energy architecture in terms of open markets, cross-border trade, energy security, clean energy, investment promotion and investment protection. The importance of Africa in global development, stability and peace cannot be overestimated, therefore the African continent must be present in global platforms addressing global challenges. From the end of the Cold War to a steady warming planet, from East-West to North-South relations, the International Energy Charter is a benchmark for a global, secure, sustainable and open energy sector, open to Africa.