The 28th Ministerial Meeting of the Energy Charter Conference drew to a close November 29, 2017, in Ashgabat, the capital city of Turkmenistan. More than 60 country delegations and international organisations contributed to the proceedings of the conference during the two days, addressing the key themes of the event: "Mobilising investment for a sustainable energy future and diversified transportation routes". National delegations travelled great distances to participate in the Conference – Guatemala, the United States, South Korea, Japan, Nigeria, and The Gambia to name just a few points of departure – as Turkmenistan hosted one of the most successful ministerial meetings in the near-three-decade long history of the Energy Charter Process.

The strength of the event was reflected not only on the basis of the participation from many delegations from Energy Charter Treaty (ECT) member countries, but also through the impressive statements made during the Conference by newcomer countries of the level of the United Arab Emirates, Nigeria and a host of other states from Africa and Asia. Other major energy power-house countries, such as China and the United States, also made strong statements endorsing the relevance of the Energy Charter Process for trade and investment in the global energy sector. A number of other countries, including Jordan, Pakistan, Yemen, Chad, the Kingdom of Swaziland, Nigeria and The Gambia, reported on their commitment to acceding to the Energy Charter Treaty (ECT).

The question of what sort of Treaty will they accede to in the future was also discussed by delegations. In this context, a number of countries, including ECT members Japan and Spain, advocated their support for the need to modernise the Treaty. While the prospect of Treaty modernisation may have seemed unlikely less than one year ago, it now seems possible that basic consultations on
how to approach this highly complex topic may commence when Turkmenistan hands over the Chairmanship of the Energy Charter Conference to Romania on January 1, 2018.

Energy Charter Conference adopts the Ashgabat Declaration

The Energy Charter Conference adopted the Ashgabat Declaration (in English and Russian) at its 28th Meeting held on 28-29 November 2017 under the chairmanship of Turkmenistan. The Conference was attended by delegates of 52 countries from different regions of the world and 10 international organisations. The Ashgabat Energy Charter Declaration will serve as a strategic midterm document leading up to the next review which will be undertaken in 2019, in accordance with Article 34(7) of the Energy Charter Treaty.

The Declaration acknowledges the importance of the modernisation of the Energy Charter Process in order to strengthen long-term co-operation in the energy field and contribute to enhancing energy security. The Energy Charter Process should reflect new developments and challenges in international energy markets by addressing the following five strategic areas:

- Facilitating investment, preventing and managing investment related disputes;
- Continuing to broaden and deepen membership of the Energy Charter Treaty;
- Improving energy security through strengthened international cooperation to guarantee energy transit and facilitate trade;
- Promoting regional energy cooperation on the basis of the principles of the International Energy Charter and Energy Charter Treaty;

The Energy Charter award received by Ambassador Kazuo Kodama

Ambassador Kazuo Kodama received the annual Energy Charter Award which was presented during the 28th Energy Charter Conference held in Ashgabat on 28-29 November 2017. It was presented by the Chairman of the Conference, Babayev Maksat Mammetsaparovitch together with the Energy Charter Secretary General, Dr. Urban Rusnák.

Ambassador Kazuo Kodama is the Ambassador of Japan to the European Union and was the Vice-Chair of the Energy Charter Conference in 2016. Due to his experience and expertise, Ambassador Kodama played a vital role during the Chairmanship of Japan at the 27th Energy Charter Conference.

Active participation from ECT observers at the 28th Energy Charter Conference in Ashgabat

During the 28th Energy Charter Conference in Ashgabat on November 29-30 2017, a large number of observer countries further strengthened ties with the Energy Charter Process. A number of these countries also proclaimed the objective of acceding to the Energy Charter Treaty (ECT).
Several observer countries are nearing ECT ratification

Jordan, Yemen and Burundi are in the ratification stage of their respective ECT accession procedures. High-level representatives from these countries made statements regarding their envisaged accession to the ECT during the conference.

ECT accession being considered by noticeable number of observer countries

During the conference proceedings, a noticeable number of countries, including Bangladesh, Chad, Guatemala, Nigeria, The Gambia, Swaziland and Uganda confirmed their intention to strengthen cooperation with the International Energy Charter Organisation in view of preparing their accession to the ECT.

Leading international energy powers move closer to the International Energy Charter

The United States of America, The United Arab Emirates (UAE), China and the Republic of Korea referred to the relevance of the Energy Charter Treaty for promoting trade and investment in the international energy sector. Mr Christopher Miller, from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), suggested that the United States seeks a transparent and level playing field in the competition for traditional hydrocarbon resources, a comment which reflects a core mission of the Energy Charter.

H.E. Dr Matar Al Neyadi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Energy in the U.A.E, reminded delegations of the recent signing of the International Energy Charter by the UAE in June 2017, before outlining possible further areas of cooperation. Dr Al Neyadi invited delegations to participate in the World Energy Congress which the UAE is hosting in Abu Dhabi in 2019.

The Vice Administrator of China’s National Energy Administration, Mr Farong Li, informed delegations of the creation of the International Energy Charter-China Electricity Council Joint Research Centre. The establishment of the research centre can be considered as a new milestone in the relationship between the International Energy Charter and China.

Dr Rusnák also met with Mr Jeha Choi, Director of the International Security Division at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea. They discussed possibilities for further cooperation, the need to improve the energy security in Northeast Asia, and the secondment of an official from Seoul to the Energy Charter Secretariat. The Islamic Republic of Iran, a recent signatory of the International Energy Charter, also attended the 28th Energy Charter Conference.

All observer countries have been invited to participate in the ECT modernisation process meetings which will begin with its first meeting in February 2018.
Eurasian energy security discussed with students from universities in Turkmenistan

On 27 November 2017, Energy Charter Secretary General, Dr. Urban Rusnák, delivered a master-class on Eurasian energy security to a group of university students from local universities in association with the Institute of International Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan. The Secretary General highlighted the important role played by Turkmenistan within the context of the Eurasian gas supply chain, and discussed the importance of transit security as a factor enabling energy markets to function effectively.

High level meetings in advance of the 28th Energy Charter Conference

On 27 November 2017, Energy Charter Secretary General Dr. Urban Rusnák held a first ever meeting with the highest energy official from the Republic of The Gambia, the country’s Minister of Petroleum & Energy, Hon. Fafa Sanyang. The Gambia is a strategically important country in West Africa, which is seeking to expand its memberships to international organisations. It signed the International Energy Charter in August 2017, joining a host of other countries from the African continent which have already taken this important step in their international energy cooperation strategies.

Earlier in the day, Secretary General likewise held a meeting with Dr. Eli Jidere Bala, the Director General of the Energy Commission of Nigeria, a leading African energy producer which signed the International Energy Charter in March 2017. This meeting reflected the increasing levels of awareness about the Energy Charter in relative newcomer countries to the Charter process in the African continent. The topic of Nigeria’s possible accession to the Energy Charter Treaty was touched upon during the meeting.

Further, on the morning of 28 November, Dr. Rusnák held a first ever meeting with Engineer Abdullah Moshen Al-akwa, Minister of Electricity and Energy of the Republic of Yemen. It was confirmed during this meeting that the government of Yemen has approved all relevant internal ratification procedures enabling Yemen to accede to the Energy Charter Treaty. A presidential decree is now anticipated, which will make it the newest country to accede to the Energy Charter Treaty.