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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: EEAS intention to negotiate a "Joint Declaration on reducing methane emissions from fossil fuels"

Delegations will find in the annex the EEAS intention to negotiate, in close cooperation with the Commission, a "Joint Declaration on reducing methane emissions from fossil fuels".

EEAS(2022) 1717

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EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE



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EEAS Reference	EEAS(2022) 1717
To	Energy Working Party in Council of the European Union
Title / Subject	EEAS intention to negotiate a "Joint Declaration on reducing methane emissions from fossil fuels"
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EEAS(2022) 1717

SUBJECT: EEAS intention to negotiate, in close cooperation with the Commission, a “Joint Declaration on reducing methane emissions from fossil fuels”

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REMARKS:

This note is to inform the Council of the EEAS intention to negotiate, in close cooperation with the Commission, a non-legally binding declaration with a group of major fossil fuel importer and exporter countries in order to reduce methane and other greenhouse gas emissions from the energy sector. The EEAS, in close cooperation with the Commission, will revert back to the Council once there is a stable text of the draft declaration.

A. CONTEXT

The EU’s 2020 methane strategy¹ set out a series of domestic and international policy actions in order to reduce the EU’s methane emissions. Internally, the most prominent measure is new legislation concerning methane emissions in the energy sector, which is currently being considered in the Council and Parliament. Externally, the EU has been at the forefront of new international initiatives aimed to increase awareness and abatement action concerning methane. In November 2021, the EU co-convened – together with the United States – the Global Methane Pledge (GMP), which included a political commitment by over 120 countries to collectively reduce methane emissions across all relevant sectors (energy, waste management and agriculture) by 30% compared to 2020. Ever since, the EU has supported various implementing measures to make the GMP operational both as a functioning plurilateral initiative and through national implementation action across the globe. Twenty Member States have joined the GMP in their own right.

Recognising the short-term potential for action in the energy sector in particular, the methane strategy also suggested that the EU should aim to leverage its global market power in the energy (chiefly fossil gas) sector to drive towards “ambitious international monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) standards” and hence promote the adoption of emission-reduction technologies. In practice, it is particularly important that a developing global agreement on MRV standards and approaches, including the role of the International Emission’s Observatory is in line with internal legislation currently under preparation. Such a uniform approach to methane will ensure more efficient abatement efforts and specifically help the EU’s goal to develop a methane supply-index, which can serve as a basis for future policy development.

¹ COM(2020) 663

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Preliminary exchanges over the last 18 months appear to indicate that joint action solely by main fossil fuel importers (e.g. EU, Japan, South Korea, UK) may not be feasible, particularly in the current geopolitical and energy market context underpinned by energy security risk. It may, however be possible to build a coalition of significant importers and exporters and market participants who are progressive in their approach towards methane abatement (e.g. US, Norway, Qatar, Malaysia, Singapore, Australia), which could – in effect – fulfil the role of global standard setting, while also strengthening energy trading links.

B. OBJECTIVES

The objective is to agree on a Joint Declaration among a group of major fossil fuel importer and exporter countries that

- affirms climate action and energy transition goals
- affirms the importance of methane abatement in this process
- affirms commitments to methane abatement goals, and to internationally accepted MRV standards (particularly the Oil and Gas Partnership 2.0 standard)
- endorses the role of the International Methane Emissions Observatory set up within the UN Environment Programme
- recognises the role of methane abatement in strengthening energy security
- supports the development of relevant technical agreements
- promotes domestic policies with immediate and short-term effect on reducing energy related methane emissions.

The initiative is to be co-lead by the EU and the United States, and endorsed at COP27. If preparations by COP27 cannot be concluded, the Joint Statement may be adopted at another appropriate high-profile international event in late 2022 or early 2023.