

Press Release

UfM Gas Platform dual event on Mediterranean energy perspectives and the role of gas in a just energy transition



Paris, 18 December 2023 – The Organisation Méditerranéenne de l'Énergie et du Climat (OMEC, formerly OME), as Secretariat of the UfM Gas Platform and with the support of the European Commission, organized two events at its premises in Paris on 14 December 2023. About 60 delegates, online or in person, from institutions and the industry from both shores of the Mediterranean Sea contributed to the success of the events which were convened within the framework of the 2023-25 Program of Work of the UfM Gas Platform.

The first part of the day was structured as a capacity building session and provided an overview of the Mediterranean energy perspectives over the next 30 years (as presented in OMEC's flagship publication, Mediterranean Energy Perspectives 2023, launched during the COP28 in Dubai).

OMEC experts presented the two scenarios of MEP 2023 which explore different pathways for the Mediterranean energy system to 2050, taking into account the impact of the recent energy crisis in its prognoses. For this outlook, OMEC has updated its Reference Scenario as a base scenario and an alternative scenario co-funded by the European Commission, the ProMED "Net Zero Carbon" Scenario, incorporating the latest country long term strategies and where all Mediterranean countries reach carbon neutrality by 2050.

Regardless of the scenario, the South Mediterranean countries will increase their energy demand through 2050 and will overtake the North Mediterranean demand by the end of this decade. Decarbonization would lead to a significant shift away from traditional hydrocarbons (oil, natural gas and coal) towards non-fossil fuels, led by renewable energy. In the ProMED Scenario, both oil and coal would be nearly totally displaced by 2050. Achieving carbon neutrality for the Mediterranean region would not only involve a significant further acceleration in the deployment of clean energy

technologies over the next 30 years, with wind and solar as pillars of decarbonation, but would also require the implementation of stringent energy efficiency policies & measures, including major behavioural changes, as well as strengthened cooperation at regional level.

The second part of the day was structured as a workshop where participants debated the role of gas in a just energy transition.

In a keynote speech, the President of MEDREG (the Association of Mediterranean Energy Regulators) underlined the crucial role of regulatory bodies in navigating the complexities of energy transitions and fostering sustainable development. He commended the importance of natural gas in the energy transition process while recalling that "it must be carefully considered and managed", and that "we must ensure that gas investments are aligned with long-term climate goals and that methane emissions are minimised."

Experts pointed out that gaseous fuels will continue to play a critical role in the decarbonization process, ensuring security of supply along the process. Transition to clean energies is on its way but much more needs to be done to bring fossil fuels demand down in ways that meet national and global climate goals. In this sense, natural gas, green and low-carbon gases, as well as hydrogen, have an important potential and their development is expected to be fast.

The EU has embarked in a trajectory towards carbon neutrality by 2050. While in the short term imports of natural gas should remain important, in the longer run, reduction of methane emissions is needed for imports of gas to the EU to be maintained. But the EU strategy can become fully effective only if its closest neighbours follow a similar path. Participants agreed that this requires strengthened cooperation at regional level and between public and private sectors. More integrated Mediterranean energy markets are necessary in order to encourage and facilitate investments and increase the flow of gas from the South Mediterranean region into the EU.

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Initiated in Malta in July 2014, confirmed in Rome in November 2014 and launched in June 2015, in Brussels, the objective of the UfM Gas Platform is to enhance the cooperation in the Euro-Med. region between all stakeholders of the gas chain, in a bottom-up approach to improve gas security by identifying barriers and opportunities. The "Organisation Méditerranéenne de l'Énergie et du Climat" (OMEC) runs the Platform's secretariat in close coordination with the UfM co-presidency.

The UfM Gas Platform is one of the three UfM Energy Platforms (the two others are on regional electricity market and on renewable energy and energy efficiency) established by EU Energy Ministers, Ministers of Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries, and the European Commission to further strengthen regional cooperation in the Mediterranean for ensuring secure, affordable and sustainable energy for the region and beyond.

More information about the UfM Gas Platform available at <https://www.ufmgasplatform.org/>