

Press Release

UfM Gas Platform webinar on fighting methane emissions



Paris, 12 July 2021 – As part of the UfM Gas Platform 2022 activities, the Observatoire Méditerranéen de l'Énergie (OME) organized with the support of the European Commission, a webinar on “fighting methane emissions: latest developments” on 7 July 2022. The meeting was organised through video conferencing.

In his welcoming remarks, Sohbet Karbuz, OME, indicated that the aim of the webinar was to discuss recent developments and initiatives on fighting methane emissions since the release in December 2021 of the UfM Gas Platform report entitled “Management and reduction of methane emissions in the Mediterranean region: Status and actions”. He also mentioned that the webinar was the first session of a new webinar series that will be organised on a regular basis by the OME, as Secretariat of the UfM Gas Platform, to exchange on energy hot topics and promote transfer of knowledge among Gas Platform stakeholders.

To begin, Ms Tania Meixus Fernandez from Enagas and M. Pascal Alas from GRTgaz, made a common presentation on the latest and ongoing initiatives to keep fighting methane emissions. Natural gas plays an important role worldwide by replacing more polluting fuels. However, to keep its role in the future, it requires further reductions of methane emissions, as well as to improve the reliability of the emissions data. According to the IEA, oil and gas operations worldwide emitted just over 70 Mt of methane into the atmosphere in 2020. Therefore, focusing on methane emissions is essential and reducing them is one of the most important strategies to rapidly impact global warming.

Ms Meixus and M. Alas then continued with the work carried on by the EC to propose a regulation on methane emissions. They concluded by presenting several international initiatives and their respective goals; mainly to assess and reduce global methane emissions.

Next, Ms Rosa Antidormi from the European Commission spoke on the recent developments and compliance options of the Mediterranean Emission Control Area to reduce ship's pollution. She first highlighted the recent major breakthrough in June 2022 of the designation of the Mediterranean Sea, as a whole, as an Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides. It was approved at the 78th session of the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 78) of the International Maritime Organization (IMO). The formal designation of the Mediterranean Sea as an Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides will be put forward for adoption at the 79th session of MEPC planned in December 2022. Capping sulphur content in fuel oil used on board ships operating within the Mediterranean Sea Emission Control Area is expected to drop SOx emissions by almost 80%. The amendment could enter into force in mid-2024, with the new limit for sulphur in fuel oil used on board ships taking effect from 2025.

With this in mind, Ms Antidormi recalled that LNG is being considered as one of the prime solutions in meeting these reduction requirements and has strong potential in the Mediterranean region. But it faces the challenges of reducing methane emissions, uneven distribution across the region and lack of sufficient infrastructure in place.

Last Sohbet Karbuz from the OME made a presentation on gas flaring in the Mediterranean region. After progress was made in the late 1990s and 2000s to reduce flaring, volumes have remained static over the last 10 years, plateauing at around 144 bcm worldwide in 2021. M. Karbuz stressed out that, today, more than 10% of all gas flared worldwide comes from Mediterranean oil and gas producers. He also added that reducing the amount of flaring is essential as it would provide significant additional energy supply, especially for Mediterranean energy producers, and would lead to a direct reduction in methane emissions.

To conclude the webinar, speakers agreed that there was still potential to improve the transparency of the data and to achieve further reductions of methane emissions. But the lack of knowledge on methane emission issues was still a problem and therefore international collaboration and capacity building of companies involved were essential.

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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 "Observatoire Méditerranéen de l'Énergie" (OME) 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/>