JOINT POLITICAL DECLARATION

OF THE PENTALATERAL ENERGY FORUM

ON THE ROLE OF HYDROGEN TO DECARBONISE THE ENERGY SYSTEM IN EUROPE

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The Ministers of Energy of the Pentalateral Energy Forum, consisting of Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland affirm their commitment to strengthen their cooperation on hydrogen produced in a CO_2 reducing manner with the aim of contributing to the full decarbonisation of the energy system, with particular emphasis on renewable hydrogen, and to enable a forward-looking European hydrogen infrastructure and liquid market in the near future.

The Ministers acknowledge:

- the need to decarbonise the energy system and to achieve the 2030 climate and energy targets and climate neutrality in Europe by 2050, in line with the Paris Agreement;
- the potential of hydrogen, particularly from renewable sources, for the decarbonisation of hard-to-abate sectors, such as in industry and in transport and to play a key role in an integrated future energy system in Europe based on sector coupling and the development of seasonal energy storage;
- the need for a timely scale up of the production of hydrogen in Europe in a coordinated way, with focus on renewable hydrogen, to ensure safe, competitive, available and sustainable energy supply, while increasing European cooperation, such as through the "Clean Hydrogen Alliance" in the recently announced European Industrial Strategy;
- the importance of enhancing international cooperation to create a global renewable hydrogen market and ensure common global standards;
- that due to the current high cost, utilisation in sectors and areas where the use of hydrogen is closest to competitiveness or where there are limited alternatives should initially be prioritized;
- the need to put energy efficiency first and increase the direct electrification across all sectors, where it is technically feasible and cost-effective;
- the position of the Pentalateral Energy Forum as a frontrunner in the field of European regional energy cooperation and the significant role it can play in the scale-up.

The Ministers express the aim to:

- design a common long-term vision for 100% renewable hydrogen to contribute to the achievement of decarbonising the energy system in Europe;
- identify possible objectives for 2030 and beyond, while taking into account the respective priorities set out by Penta Member States;
- assess the possibility of coordinated definitions and certification or labelling for renewable and decarbonised hydrogen with regards to origin and sustainability to enable cross-border hydrogen trade, taking into account already existing schemes and methodologies;
- address the role of harmonized levels for hydrogen blending as well as technical standards for gas infrastructure;

- develop common concepts for cooperation to support the further deployment of hydrogen to contribute to decarbonising the energy system, with a particular focus on renewable hydrogen, taking into account works already carried out, such as
    - identifying cross-border projects between Penta countries,
    - identifying and addressing unnecessary regulatory and market barriers,
    - exploring potential joint funding mechanisms,
    - exploring possibilities for common studies on the integration of hydrogen in the existing gas infrastructure, including impact on gas quality and end-use appliances and the role of H2-readiness,
    - exploring possibilities to support activities of, among others, network operators to ensure interoperability between existing gas networks in Europe with regards to hydrogen blending;
- assess with Penta Member States the role of CO2 prices in the hydrogen market and of taxes, levies and tariffs in sector coupling;
- address safety aspects and ensure public awareness to increase the acceptance of hydrogen from a social and consumer perspective;
- encourage other European countries to join the approach.

The Ministers call on the European Commission to[1]:

- secure Europe's position as a front runner in innovation, industrial competitiveness and decarbonisation;
- develop a roadmap with objectives for hydrogen produced in a CO_2 reducing manner by 2030 and beyond, with particular emphasis on renewable hydrogen, in order to contribute to decarbonising the energy system, taking into account the respective priorities set out by EU Member States;
- present a timely action plan followed by legislative proposals to enable a flexible, fit-for-purpose regulatory approach and to stimulate a liquid market for hydrogen in the coming years, while taking into account the carbon footprint of the transportation of hydrogen;
- analyse approaches to increase domestic production to enable rapid upscaling of hydrogen in order to cover rising industrial as well as end-user demand; in this regard develop supportive frameworks for European industry needed for upscaling across the value chain;
- deepen international cooperation on hydrogen to enable a global renewable hydrogen market and ensure common global standards, such as on sustainability, especially with a view to the growing role of hydrogen imports in the future to contribute to decarbonising the energy system;
- address the role of harmonised levels for hydrogen-blending tolerance while ensuring interoperability between gas networks in Europe;
- promote the uptake of infrastructure projects for hydrogen, inter alia in the upcoming revision of the TEN-E regulation;
- assess the implications of pure hydrogen grids, for example through repurposing of existing gas infrastructure in Europe, taking into account costs related to adaptation and upgrade of infrastructures;

[1] Switzerland not being a Member State of the European Union does not call the European Commission to act on hydrogen. Nevertheless it supports the call in its substance.

- identify requirements in the field of end-use appliances and analyze approaches to stimulate the development and deployment of H2-ready appliances;
- reflect the future role of hydrogen in upcoming action plans and legislative work; explore preconditions for TSOs and DSOs along with market players for their role in the scale-up of hydrogen production, including new business and cooperation models for power to gas installations;
- establish swiftly a robust methodology to allow physical traceability on the market of hydrogen where possible, also with regard to sustainability, and provide transparency for consumers;
- identify and remove unnecessary barriers related to investments in hydrogen, with particular emphasis on renewable hydrogen, to contribute to decarbonising the energy system; mobilise increased financing options and stimulate investments on European and national level, inter alia through the "Sustainable Europe Investment Plan", the Structural Funds, the European Investment Bank and the "Connecting Europe Facility";
- increase support for innovation and RD&D in renewable hydrogen inter alia through Horizon Europe and the Joint Undertaking for Fuel Cells and Hydrogen, with a view to all stages of deployment; in this regard also step up commitment for hydrogen within global initiatives, such as Mission Innovation and Clean Energy Ministerial.

This Political Declaration does not create any rights or obligations under international law and does not intend to replace or modify any existing legal obligations between the signatories.

Signed at The Hague on the eleventh day of May of the year two thousand and twenty.

For the Kingdom of the Netherlands

For the Republic of Austria

For the Kingdom of Belgium

For the Federal Republic of Germany

For the French Republic

For the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

For the Swiss Confederation