

## EFG and the UNECE gather international experts to discuss cooperation on natural resources

**PRESS RELEASE | 10 February 2017 | Brussels** – The European Federation of Geologists (EFG) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) co-organised, from 9 to 10 February 2017, the conference “**International cooperation on natural resources: geoscientists’ contribution to enhanced governance, policy making and attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals**”. The event was held at the Royal Belgium Institute of Natural Sciences, a venue located only a few hundred meters away from the European Parliament, and was supported by a broad range of European and international organisations. Nearly 100 participants from across Europe and abroad attended the event whose international character was also displayed through a broad geographical representation on a programme conveying views from Europe, South Africa, the United States of America and Canada.

The continuing rise in global population and living standards, as well as technological innovation, is increasing global demand for energy and minerals with consequent requirements for a broader and more diversified range of natural resources, including conventional fossil or nuclear fuels and renewable energy. Therefore, a transparent and consistent estimation and classification methodology for mineral and renewable energy resources is vital to support international and national resources management and forecasting and to advance global cooperation. In this context, the aim of the conference was to contribute to the creation of a solid European Knowledge Database on mineral and energy resources by fostering the convergence of terminology and the comparability of data. During two days, almost 30 speakers - representing relevant UNECE and European policy areas, as well as international and European regulatory authorities, industries, non-governmental organisations and academia - discussed a transparent and harmonised European classification framework and the possibility for such framework to be based on the United Nations Framework Classification (UNFC).

The first day of the conference was dedicated to underlining the importance of international cooperation on raw materials. **Vladimir Šucha**, Director General of the European Commission’s Joint Research Centre (JRC), opened the conference by reminding the audience that a common framework was mandatory to allow a sustainable management of resources, necessary condition for the creation of more jobs and growth within Europe. He expressed the European Commission’s support to the UN framework classification covering all energy resources, and particularly renewables, all minerals and biotics. **David MacDonald**, current chair of the Bureau of the Expert Group on Resource Classification of the UNECE, followed up on Vladimir Šucha’s point on the role of a common framework: “You need a balanced and sustainable development of all energy resources, as energy is the key to attaining all Sustainable Development Goals. And this



*Opening speech by Vladimir Šucha, Director General of the European Commission’s Joint Research Centre (JRC).*

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sustainable development relies critically on measurement.” According to David MacDonald, the UNFC is a common framework that has potential for application in Europe, as it serves as an umbrella of multiple classification systems that allows all disciplines to speak a common language. Following David MacDonald, **Marie Donnelly**, Director for Renewable Energy at the Europe Commission’s DG Energy, insisted that scientists and industry members, in their collaboration, should not forget the consumer and his need for a better understanding and a more active role. Ending the first session of the day, **Mattia Pellegrini**, Head of Unit for the DG Growth at the European Commission, underlined the importance of raw material diplomacy, and the many achievements of the European Commission in its international relations.

The second session of the first day was dedicated to a panel of experts who debated on the importance of excellence in the use of natural resources classification systems in management and reporting. High-level speakers from the European Commission, the UNECE, CRIRSCO, PERC, Geoscientists Canada and the American Institute of Professional Geologists (AIPG) insisted on the importance of international dialogue in times when nationalism and protectionism are rising. In this regard, it was emphasised that public outreach, transparency and the development of a common language are becoming ever more important. The different experts also insisted on the main qualities of the reporters’ profiles: competence, experience and constant training.

On the second day of the conference, representatives from industry and EFG’s expert groups analysed the application of the UNFC reporting standard to the field of oil and gas, CO<sub>2</sub> geological storage, minerals and – since 2016 – to the field of geothermal energy. The importance of UNFC as an umbrella classification system providing a common language applicable to the different sectors of natural resources was underlined. Roger Dixon, South African representative on the Committee for Mineral Reserve International Reporting Standards (CRIRSCO) outlined the synergies between the UNFC-2009 standard and the CRIRSCO International Reporting Template, demonstrating how the Mineralised Inventory can be managed using UNFC.

The conference closed with a panel discussion on socio-economic and environmental drivers for natural resources development and management. **Alex Nwegbu**, President of the Organisation of African Geological Societies (OAGS), presented his institution’s views on sustainable management of mineral resources in Africa. Other high-level speakers underlined that Development Minerals should be part of Africa’s industrialisation and that artisanal mining represents the majority of mining in Africa. The panel agreed that education, skill development and best practice schemes are key to link the exploitation of natural resources to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and that geoscientists can play a progressive role in this respect.

**Martin Bohle**, Advisor to the Deputy Director-General at the European Commission’s DG Research and Innovation and Corresponding Citizen Scientist of the International Association for Promoting Geoethics, officially closed the conference stressing the importance of public outreach and transparency.



*Closing speech by Martin Bohle, DG Research and Innovation.*

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**About EFG:** *The European Federation of Geologists is a non-governmental organisation that was established in 1980 and includes today 25 national association members. EFG is a professional organisation whose main aims are to contribute to a safer and more sustainable use of the natural environment, to protect and inform the public and to promote a more responsible exploitation of natural resources. EFG's members are National Associations whose principal objectives are based in similar aims. The guidelines to achieve these aims are the promotion of excellence in the application of geology and the creation of public awareness of the importance of geoscience for the society.*

**About UNECE:** *The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) was set up in 1947 by ECOSOC. It is one of five regional commissions of the United Nations. UNECE's major aim is to promote pan-European economic integration. UNECE includes 56 member States in Europe, North America and Asia. However, all interested United Nations member States may participate in the work of UNECE. Over 70 international professional organizations and other non-governmental organizations take part in UNECE activities.*

This event has been supported by the Committee for Mineral Reserves International Reporting Standards (CRIRISCO), the European Association of Geoscientists and Engineers (EAGE), EuroGeoSurveys, the Geological Society of Africa (GSAf), the Pan European Mineral Reserves and Resources Reporting Committee (PERC) and the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences.

**More information:** [www.eurogeologists.eu](http://www.eurogeologists.eu) and <https://www.unece.org>

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