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Strengthening links in Beijing

Workshops organised by the IEA's NEET initiative (Networks of Expertise in Energy Technology) are reinforcing dialogues between IEA-country energy technology experts and colleagues in "Plus-5" nations and other partner countries with fast growing energy consumption. By enabling participants to compare experience and explore ways of working collaboratively, these workshops lay the foundations for wider application of innovative energy technology solutions to meet common energy challenges.

John Gale is General Manager of the IEA Greenhouse Gas R&D Programme (IEA GHG). He took part in the 1-2 November Beijing energy technology workshop organised by the IEA NEET initiative together with the Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology and the China Coal Research Institute. IEA GHG is one of 41 IEA international collaborative programmes.

The IEA Greenhouse Gas R&D Programme (IEA GHG) currently brings together some 17 countries and 15 international sponsors. The programme's membership is largely drawn from IEA countries, with the exception of India. Since its creation in 1991, IEA GHG has been providing information on the role that technology can play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

We are all acutely aware that global energy use and emissions of greenhouse gases are rising, and that the increases are very significant in developing countries. This is why IEA GHG encourages new participation among non-OECD countries. The IEA NEET initiative's work fostering involvement of fast growing energy consuming countries like Brazil, China, India, Mexico, Russia and South Africa in the activities of the IEA Implementing Agreement programmes (IAs) is therefore well aligned with IEA GHG activities on expanding membership among these countries. China, for instance, has been an observer at IEA GHG Executive Committee meetings for several years now. The IEA NEET workshop in Beijing thus presented a welcome opportunity for IEA GHG to further its discussions with China's Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) regarding Chinese membership.

The NEET Beijing workshop was well attended. More than 100 Chinese participants from government, industry and academia were present. The most important outcome, in my view, was the announcement that MOST wishes to set up a secretariat to act as a link between the Ministry, the IEA and the IEA energy technology Implementing Agreement programmes. This announcement by the Ministry's Mr. Zhang Zhihong, Deputy Director-General, Department of High and New Technology Development and Industrialization, was a welcome development. The proposed secretariat would certainly strengthen the potential for future co-operation between us and our Chinese counterparts.



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It was very encouraging, moreover, to see that China has a strong commitment to developing clean coal technology – in particular near zero-emission technology – to improve efficiency of coal use and reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants. We are looking forward to further IEA interaction with MOST through the Committee on Energy Research and Technology (CERT) and the Coal Industry Advisory Board (CIAB), as well as the Working Party on Fossil Fuels (WPFF), in order to determine how to move forward on furthering collaboration with China in this area. For CO₂ emissions reduction, specific interest was identified in collaboration on CO₂-Enhanced Coal-Bed Methane (ECBM) and CO₂-Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR). The need was highlighted for capacity building activities on storage capacity assessments, environmental impacts and student exchange. On the latter, a number of Chinese groups were interested in participating in these activities, notably the Administrative Center for China's Agenda 21, the Thermal Power Research Institute, the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the China Coal Research Institute, Tsinghua University and China Petroleum and Chemical Corporation (SINOPEC).



Among the areas of collaboration identified, CO₂ capture technology was one where we were aware of both considerable research under way and interest in working together. IEA GHG operates an international research network on CO₂ capture. Having for a number of years invited Chinese researchers to participate, we intend to take this a step further over the coming months and actually hold one of these meetings in Beijing, the first time one of our meetings is held in a non-IEA country.

Student development is also an area where we are collaborating with China. Last year we organised an international summer school for graduate and post graduate students on CO₂ capture and storage. Here again, we encourage Chinese students to attend and were very pleased to welcome four students from Tsinghua University in Beijing. We intend to turn this into an annual event and, in due course, we shall consider holding a summer school in China

An equally positive outcome from the event was that new areas of possible collaboration were singled out, and that interest in collaboration with IEA GHG was expressed by a good number of groups. We shall follow up with our Chinese partners and hope that this will lead to their full membership of IEA GHG.

As the newly appointed General Manager of IEA GHG, I was able to benefit from the workshop in other useful ways. It facilitated pursuit of established collaboration and ongoing discussion with counterparts from other IEA R&D programmes. Those present at the meeting included the Photovoltaic Power Systems IA, the Heat Pump IA, the Hydrogen IA, the Geothermal IA, the Clean Coal Centre, the Bioenergy IA, the Emission Reduction in Combustion IA and the ETSAP energy modeling programme. The presence of so many IA's focusing on renewables reflects China's growing interest in developing and applying renewable energy as a part of its energy portfolio. Of course, it is fossil fuels – and especially coal – that will meet the largest part of China's future energy needs, and that explains the interest of collaboration through IEA GHG and the Clean Coal Centre.

Finally, I would add that the presence at the NEET Beijing workshop of locally-based participants from the Asian Development Bank and the European Commission enabled me to reacquaint myself with many previously established contacts in China. It is our hope that this network of contacts will help support our aim of welcoming China as a member of the IEA Greenhouse Gas R&D Programme.

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