



Opening Remarks

GECF Event on the Sideline of the 4th G20 ETWG meeting

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Secretary General
Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF)

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Excellencies,

Distinguished speakers,

Honorable Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour to address you at this important event, which the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) is privileged to organise in partnership with the South African Department of Electricity and Energy. I express my deep appreciation for this opportunity.

Allow me also to warmly congratulate the Republic of South Africa for assuming the G20 Presidency—the first time it is held on African soil—under the banner of Solidarity, Equality, and Sustainability. These principles deeply resonate with the Algiers Declaration, adopted at the 7th GECF Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Algeria last year.

Africa is at the very heart of the GECF family. Nine of our twenty Member Countries are African nations, and we expect more to join in the future, making Africa the largest regional constituency within our Forum.

Excellencies,

Africa is a continent of immense promise. It is home to 1.4 billion people today, and by mid-century, another one billion will be added—making it the most populous and youngest region in the world. By 2050, the working-age population will expand by nearly 90%. To transform this demographic dynamism into inclusive growth, lasting prosperity, and improved quality of life, Africa must unlock the full potential of its vast energy resources.

However, the reality is stark. More than 600 million Africans still live without access to electricity, and nearly one billion people rely on traditional biomass for cooking. These are not just statistics. These are lives marked by premature death, children unable to study at night, women and girls walking long distances to gather wood, and youth held back from opportunity.

Energy poverty is not only a development challenge—it is a barrier to health, education, gender equality, and dignity. Ending it is a moral imperative.

The GECF firmly believes that Africa requires all forms of energy—both fossil fuels and renewables. Africa’s challenge is not about substitution, but about energy addition: expanding supply to meet rising demand and close the access gap.

Consider liquefied petroleum gas (LPG)—a by-product of natural gas. For families reliant on wood or charcoal, switching to LPG is life-changing. It reduces indoor air pollution, saves lives, protects forests, and empowers women and children through time savings and improved health. This is what energy addition means in Africa: dignity, inclusion, and opportunity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Natural gas is a cornerstone of Africa’s development strategy. The continent holds 8.8% of global proven reserves, making gas a strategic asset for industrialisation, power generation, and fertiliser production. It is also increasingly essential for digital infrastructure such as data centres. In many countries, it also provides critical export revenues that support public services and investment.

According to the GECF's Global Gas Outlook, Africa's gas demand is expected to grow nearly three times faster than the global average, reaching almost 400 billion cubic metres by 2050. Unlocking this potential will require nearly US\$1 trillion in cumulative investment across the gas value chain.

To attract this capital, we need innovative financial instruments—including concessional and blended finance, de-risking tools, and stronger support from development finance institutions. Just as urgently, we must address the systematic overestimation of sovereign and political risk in Africa, which inflates borrowing costs, reduces investor interest, and delays vital projects.

Technology and innovation must also be harnessed. Beyond traditional infrastructure, Africa can benefit from modular and decentralised energy solutions, such as virtual pipelines, small-scale LNG, CNG, and off-grid systems—especially in remote or underserved regions. In parallel, LNG-to-power projects in coastal cities offer scalable, cleaner electricity for both industry and households.

Equally vital is the human dimension. Africa's energy strategy must put people first. Projects must be paired with investment in local content, training, and job creation. Empowering youth and women is not only right—it is essential for sustainable development. Building domestic capacity across the gas value chain—in operations, regulation, and governance—is key to long-term resilience and ownership.

Let me also highlight the growing importance of artificial intelligence. AI is already reshaping the natural gas sector—from exploration and production, to LNG logistics, emissions monitoring, and real-time trading. If properly harnessed, AI can make Africa's gas more efficient, cleaner,

and more competitive. But the digital divide threatens to leave many African countries behind. Bridging this gap—through investment in digital infrastructure and skills—is as critical as building pipelines or terminals.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The G20 has a pivotal role to play. By supporting African-led energy and infrastructure strategies, promoting interconnectivity, and aligning development finance with Africa’s priorities, the G20 can help ensure that Africa’s energy resources—especially natural gas—are harnessed for the benefit of all, and not left stranded.

As Nelson Mandela reminded us: *“Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity, it is an act of justice.”*

Thank you for your kind attention, and I wish you a productive and impactful discussion.