

Future of the Global Methane Initiative – Discussion Paper

Introduction

The current Global Methane Initiative (GMI) charter (“Terms of Reference”) expires 31 March 2021. To prepare for the extension of the GMI’s charter, the Steering Committee must decide on several issues regarding the future of the GMI. These include the following:

- The mission of GMI going forward;
- How GMI should leverage strategic partnerships effectively;
- The level and type of GMI support for a potential UN Year or Decade of Methane Management;
- How long the GMI Terms of Reference should be extended;
- The future of the Global Methane Challenge;
- Potential changes to the GMI governance structure; and
- Changes needed for the GMI Terms of Reference.

A discussion of these topics was planned for two days during the 2020 Global Methane Forum, which was scheduled to be held in Geneva in March 2020. The cancellation of the Forum due to the global COVID-19 pandemic created the need for a virtual forum to discuss the future of the GMI. The GMI Executive Task Force, comprised of representatives from GMI partner countries and organizations, convened on 5 occasions from May through July 2020. The Task Force’s goal was to provide perspectives to the Steering Committee to inform their decision-making related to the rechartering of GMI. The suggestions and recommendations of the Executive Task Force are presented in this document, organized by topic, including the specific questions to Steering Committee members, options for consideration and discussion, and Executive Task Force feedback, where available.

The options presented in this document are not mutually exclusive except where noted. The options presented are not an exhaustive list; Steering Committee members are encouraged to offer additional ideas and suggestions.

1. Mission and Implementation of GMI

Background:

The GMI is an international public-private partnership with a mission to reduce barriers to the recovery and use of methane as a clean energy source. GMI achieves this mission by providing technical support to deploy methane-to-energy projects around the world; serving as an information resource for Partner Countries, Project Network members, and other stakeholders; and collaborating with other international organizations focused on methane recovery and use, including the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), and the International Energy Agency (IEA).

Question for the Steering Committee:

- What specific objectives should GMI aim to achieve in the future?

Synopsis of Executive Task Force Discussions on this topic:

The Executive Task Force suggested and discussed several options for GMI priorities going forward. Several of these are currently implemented in support of GMI's mission, denoted as "status quo" and others are new or expanded options. These options, as well as potential benefits and limitations, are outlined in the following table:

Options for Steering Committee Consideration:^{1 2}

Option	Benefits	Potential Limitations
1. Collaborate with key Strategic Partners to foster high-profile opportunities (<i>status quo</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raises profile of key issues and awareness among a broader set of stakeholders • Leverages resources and networks of other organizations • Provides opportunities to identify cross-cutting strategic opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transaction costs³ to coordinate with other organizations in planning events, communication strategies, etc. • Risk of divergent priorities among key strategic partners that have broader or different objectives beyond methane
2. Continue to engage with private sector (<i>status quo</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spurs new innovations, ideas, and technologies • Leverages group that is motivated to participate • Benefits private sector through information-sharing and network-building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to "market" GMI to corporate senior management and to communicate tangible benefits to company participation • Challenge to retain neutrality and not convey endorsement or advocate for private firms • Challenge to work with multiple organizations, as many stakeholders may focus narrowly on certain sectors
3. Track, report on and promote the achievements of Partner countries (<i>new activity</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides mechanism for transparency that takes advantage of streamlined data collection processes • Improves value of GMI resources through access to better information • Provides motivation for countries to contribute information and be recognized alongside other Partner countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High barrier to persuade partners to gather and submit data • Risk of low response rate, which would provide little value at high cost • Verification processes are essential for credibility, but pose substantial cost and logistical hurdle • Without a robust data collection system or mandate to submit information, risk of receiving disparate data that are difficult to compare

¹ These options are not mutually exclusive; more than one can be pursued. This list is not exhaustive and Steering Committee members are encouraged to provide additional ideas or suggestions.

² Priorities and activities may be contingent on one or more GMI Partner countries sponsorship in terms of leadership or providing funding.

³ Transaction costs refers to the time and resources incurred by the GMI Secretariat to research appropriate stakeholder contacts, conduct outreach, and implement specific proposals for collaboration with GMI.

Option	Benefits	Potential Limitations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases visibility and awareness of mitigation successes, facilitating replication Leverages engagement of GMI delegates, etc. to identify strategic opportunities for implementation 	
4. Position GMI as a “methane hub”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverages existing resources and platforms Builds on GMI status as the only global partnership focused solely on methane mitigation across five sectors Based on existing GMI targeted, technical, in-field expertise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications, events are limited by resource and logistical constraints Can be resource-intensive to maintain robust, timely social media campaign Technical work to maintain robust tools and update accessibility and platforms can be resource-intensive
5. Establish Awards or recognition element (<i>new activity</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizes true methane mitigation champions Motivates others to participate Provides an excellent source of social media content Documents concrete actions taken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires agreement on criteria for selection of winners Requires determining process for selecting the winner(s) May be challenging to select winners due to lack of comparability across sectors, projects, achievements

Internal Recommendation: GMI is on target with its core mission-supporting activities and should continue to focus on those: (1) Collaborate with strategic partners, (2) Engage with private sector, and (4) Position GMI as a “Methane Hub”.

2. Leveraging Strategic Partnerships

Background:

Since GMI was launched, the global community's interest in addressing methane has grown significantly, including the emergence of other partnerships, coalitions, and initiatives that include reducing methane emissions as one of their aims. GMI remains the only international initiative focused solely on methane mitigation across multiple sectors. GMI collaborates routinely with other international organizations and initiatives to create synergies to mitigate methane globally, including its strategic alliances with the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), which were formally announced in 2016 as part of GMI’s rechartering at that time. These alliances have resulted in joint technical work products such as Best Practices in multiple sectors; joint technical and sector-specific events such as workshops; and large events such as the 2016 and 2018 Global Methane Forums.

Questions for the Steering Committee:

- How should GMI complement and leverage the work of its key strategic alliances with CCAC and UNECE as well as with other international organizations and initiatives working on methane mitigation?

- Where are the greatest opportunities for effective collaboration?
- How can GMI work with other organizations strategically to raise the level of ambition on methane mitigation moving forward?

Synopsis of Executive Task Force Discussions on this topic:

The Executive Task Force suggested and discussed several options for leveraging strategic partnerships going forward. These options, as well as potential benefits and limitations, are outlined in the following table:

Options for Steering Committee Consideration⁴

Option	Benefits	Potential Limitations
1. Formalize engagement with additional allies (e.g., WB, UNEP, WHO, IEA) ⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improves visibility of GMI and global methane mitigation efforts across different stakeholders, audiences • Leverages access to influence and thought leaders • Requires relatively few resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transactional cost of initiating, determining extent of agreement, and coordinating moving forward
2. Explore further opportunities for collaboration with sector-specific or environmental groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides opportunity to engage new stakeholders • Fosters innovation through new perspectives • Broadens GMI's reach • Provides potential for tangible actions, activities, and information-sharing at the sectoral level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potentially high transaction cost to reach relatively narrow audiences, including ongoing relationship building • Need to identify priorities for selecting specific groups with which to engage, which will require research and assessment
3. Consider establishing a joint GMI-CCAC committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides clarity in concrete roles and responsibilities • Provides more strategic, less "ad hoc" engagement, leading to more effective collaboration • Leverages limited resources for both organizations • Amplifies each organization's strengths and benefits both partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential lack of engagement on the part of CCAC due to competing priorities / their new strategic plan • Potential for loss of autonomy or sole "ownership" over GMI activities • Transactional costs of increased coordination • Commitment to support or engage in CCAC activities could result in fewer available resources to implement projects, workshops, and training
4. Explore aligning Oil & Gas Subcommittee with Global Methane Alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverages resources in overlapping area of focus • Leverages strong global presence of the Global Methane Alliance • Helps GMI reach more stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would need to consider alignment with GMI mission and need for separate roles • Depending on implementation, could result in fewer GMI-specific events

⁴ These options are not mutually exclusive; more than one can be pursued. This list is not exhaustive and Steering Committee members are encouraged to provide additional ideas or suggestions.

⁵ WB = World Bank; UNEP = United Nations Environment Programme; WHO = World Health Organization; IEA = International Energy Agency

Option	Benefits	Potential Limitations
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to consider impact of affiliation with CCAC and the UNEP-run Global Methane Alliance on the perception of Partner countries

Internal Recommendation: Explore further options (1) and (2): collaboration opportunities with additional allies and sector specific environmental groups.

3. UN International Year [or Decade] of Methane Management

Background:

The United Nations General Assembly, at the request of Member States, may vote to designate international days, weeks, years, or decades to promote its objectives, by providing sustained focus and marshalling resources and awareness-raising to solve international problems. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Executive Committee voted to send a recommendation for an *International Year/Decade of Methane Management* to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on June 13, 2019. ECOSOC “took note” of the recommendation, thereby formally recognizing the request. The next step in this process to formally create this designation would be for a Member State to submit a resolution to the UN General Assembly (UNGA) for a vote. If such a resolution were passed by the UNGA at its next meeting in September 2021, and if the standard 2-year interim period between the adoption of the resolution and its implementation were observed, the start date for such a Year or Decade would be 2023. An active coalition of the willing, especially Member States, could facilitate passage of such a resolution.

Potential Roles for GMI:

- GMI could play an important role in supporting and mobilizing Member State support for such a UN declaration, as well as increase the attention to and accelerate and catalyze successful methane mitigation efforts. Mechanisms for mobilizing this support include development of a communiqué by GMI Partners, or hosting a virtual high-level plenary event focused on methane.
- GMI could develop or provide substantive input to a proposed Program of Activities for implementing a UN International Year or Decade of Methane Management.

Questions for the Steering Committee:

1. Would the GMI support the launching of a UN Declaration for an International Year or Decade of Methane Management?
2. If yes, would the GMI favor support for a Year or Decade of Methane Management?
3. How could the GMI support the Declaration? Would the GMI participate in the launch or the implementation of the Declaration, or both?

Synopsis of Executive Task Force Discussions on this topic:

- The Executive Task Force discussed several options for GMI support of the UN Year or Decade of Methane Management.

- The Executive Task Force expressed strong support for a UN Declaration for an International Year/Decade on Methane. Through informal polling, the Task Force expressed preference for a Decade over a Year.
- The Task Force discussion centered on what role the GMI could play in supporting the launching of the Declaration and/or in supporting the implementation of the Declaration.

Options for Steering Committee Consideration:

Options:	Benefits	Potential Limitations
1. Does GMI Support a Declaration of a UN International Year or Decade of Methane Management? (YES or NO)		
[If YES, support such a Declaration:]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligns with GMI mission • Provides opportunity for global impact and visibility • Leverages UN platform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires quick mobilization and resources to successfully achieve resolution and implement
2. Does GMI favor an International YEAR or an International DECADE? (Choose A or B)		
A. Support a UN International YEAR of Methane Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides shorter time horizon that aligns with governments / administrations short term needs • Costs less to implement compared to a decade • Global interest may be higher with shorter campaign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource-intensive compared to short duration of benefits • Challenging to develop and implement deliverables within a 12 month time frame
B. Support a UN International DECADE of Methane Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieves more awareness raising and stakeholder engagement over the course of a decade • Leverages strong international motivation and sense of urgency • Emphasizes significance of methane mitigation as an enduring concern 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decadal activities will require more funding commitments; securing funding could be difficult • Longer time horizon may prove challenging to sustain attention to this specific campaign over time, especially if turnover in governments, administrations
3. Options for providing support to launch the UN General Assembly declaration: (choose A or B or both)		
A. Conduct outreach before the September 2021 UNGA to promote the concept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides GMI with opportunity to provide input and shape the Declaration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diplomatic effort, outside GMI core expertise
B. Support preparation of the General Assembly Declaration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides visible platform for GMI to effectively engage in global methane mitigation efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will be challenging for GMI to support passage of resolution unless one or more GMI Partners volunteer to champion the effort

Options:	Benefits	Potential Limitations
4. Options for implementing the UN General Assembly Declaration for a Year or Decade of Methane Management: (choose A or B or both)		
A. Develop a Program of activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides opportunity for GMI to contribute in a tangible way that is directly relevant to GMI's expertise 	
B. Implement one or more activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides on-going, high-visibility role for GMI that will enable more effective engagement with global methane community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing activities would be potentially resource-intensive

Internal Recommendation: Support a UN International DECADE of Methane Management, and actively participate in both the launch and implementation of the Decade.

4. GMI Charter Extension

Background:

GMI operates under a Terms of Reference, agreed upon by the Partners, which establishes the organizational framework for the Initiative. The original Terms of Reference (for what was originally known as the Methane to Markets Partnership) began on 16 November 2004. The Terms were modified and extended by the Steering Committee for an additional five years on 1 October 2010, when the name was officially changed to the Global Methane Initiative. In October 2014, the Terms of Reference were extended for an additional six months until March 2016. The current Terms of Reference commenced on 30 March 2016 and will continue in effect for 5 years, until 31 March 2021, unless extended or terminated by the Steering Committee.

Question for the Steering Committee:

- How long should the GMI charter be extended (e.g., 5 year extension to 2026, or 10 year extension to 2031)?

Synopsis of Executive Task Force Discussions on this topic:

The Executive Task Force expressed strong support for extending the Terms of Reference for GMI. The Task Force discussed two specific options for the duration of extending the GMI charter, for either five years or ten years, as described in the table below.

Options for Steering Committee Consideration:⁶

Option	Benefits	Potential Limitations
1. Extend the charter by 5 years to 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent with GMI rechartering history for Terms of Reference renewal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inconsistent with longer-term strategic objectives Does not align with timelines for CCAC re-charter (to 2030) and potential UN

⁶ The options are presented here are mutually exclusive.

Option	Benefits	Potential Limitations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent with duration of typical administration planning and fiscal cycles for many Partner governments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Decade of Methane Management If COVID-19 restrictions on travel, workshops, and in-person events extend into 2021, could have a disproportionate impact on the first year of re-charter (i.e., 20% of the extended charter)
2. Extend the charter by 10 years to 2031 (<i>preferred option of the Executive Task Force, based on informal polling</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More closely aligns with timeframes for CCAC re-charter (2030), and with potential UN International Decade of Methane Management (e.g., 2023-2033) Provides longer time horizon to plan long-term activities with significant outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides uncertainty with regard to Partner governments' planning and fiscal horizons, which are difficult to forecast over 10 years

Internal Recommendation: Extend the GMI charter by 10 years to 2031.

5. Role of Global Methane Challenge Moving Forward

Background:

At the direction of the GMI Steering Committee in 2018, the Global Methane Challenge was launched in 2019 with several objectives:

- To raise awareness of methane mitigation opportunities and success stories;
- To catalyze ambitious action to reduce methane emissions;
- To showcase policies, research, and technologies being used to reduce emissions around the world; to recognize leaders who are taking action to reduce methane emissions; and
- To celebrate achievements on the Challenge website, through emails and via social media.

To date, as part of the Challenge, GMI has posted 80 participant stories of actions in more than 23 countries, spanning the biogas, oil and gas, and coal mine sectors, including methane reduction policies, technologies, projects, and research. The Challenge was originally conceived as a one-year effort, but in November 2019 the Steering Committee extended the Challenge through December 2020.

Questions for the Steering Committee:

- Should the Challenge be extended beyond its current expiration at the end of 2020?
- If it is extended, should the Challenge be modified?

Synopsis of Executive Task Force Discussions on this topic:

The Executive Task Force suggested and discussed several options for the Global Methane Challenge going forward, including:

Options for Steering Committee Consideration:

Option	Benefits	Potential Limitations
1. Should GMI allow the Challenge to sunset at the end of 2020? (Decision: YES or NO)		
<i>If YES, allow to sunset:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing the Challenge to sunset would not require additional resources, while extending the challenge and sustaining interest and attention requires investment of resources, creativity • Allowing the Challenge to sunset still maintains access to website and success stories that provide valuable information to stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing the Challenge to sunset removes a GMI opportunity and existing platform for recognition of champions • Allowing the Challenge to sunset (e.g., not extending the challenge through 2022 or beyond) does not leverage the resources that have already been invested in the established platform/structure as a sunk cost
1. If GMI extends the Challenge, for how long?		
Options:		
A. 2022 (extend by 2 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extending through 2022 enables GMI to recognize global leaders in methane mitigation in a concrete way • Finite end date [2022] drives submissions; campaign maintains “fresh” and up-to-date information 	
B. Longer (5 years or duration of GMI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extending the Challenge (through 2022 or beyond) provides opportunity for recognition of global leaders in methane mitigation and provides a tangible deliverable for GMI • Longer term extension provides more opportunity to leverage the website, platform, and other resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If Challenge is extended indefinitely (i.e., beyond 2022), potential for diminishing returns on investments if enthusiasm wanes over time
2. If the Challenge is extended, how can it be modified or enhanced?		
A. Develop a recognition or awards element	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a more substantive, significant form of recognition for true champions • Motivates others to participate • Generates effective social media content • Shows concrete actions taken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires additional resources • Requires agreement on criteria for selection of winners • Requires determining process for selecting the winner(s) • May be challenging to select winners due to lack of comparability across sectors, projects, achievements
B. Consider co-branding with CCAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides potential to reach new audiences • Leverages CCAC outreach tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potentially time-intensive to coordinate

Option	Benefits	Potential Limitations
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for focus of Challenge to change based on different priorities
C. Develop “how to” best practices guide based on Challenge submissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides useful guide for stakeholders for replication of successes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potentially resource-intensive
D. Increase outreach through Partner networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaches new audiences • Leverages partner outreach tools • Provides opportunity for Partners to promote GMI and their involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potentially resource-intensive
E. Create a logo/badge for global leaders in methane mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides clear mechanism to recognize champions • Gains more traction for the Challenge via social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential issues with maintaining integrity of Challenge “brand” and logo • Requires development of process, procedures for allowing use of brand

Internal Recommendation: Extend the Challenge through December 2022; explore ways to (d) increase outreach and (a) create a method of recognition of participants.

6. GMI Governance Structure

Background:

The governance structure for GMI has evolved over time as the organization has grown and its needs have changed. Initially, all countries who joined what was then known as the Methane to Markets Partnership beginning in 2004 were eligible to become Steering Committee members. The Steering Committee was eventually capped at 22 partners as the membership grew. For its first 12 years, the Steering Committee had a single Chair (the United States). In the 2016 re-chartering, the Terms of Reference were revised to provide for two Co-Chairs, preferably one from a developed and one from a developing country. This new leadership model was intended to diversify the leadership opportunities within GMI and offer more opportunities for participation in the governance of the Initiative, while still maintaining a relatively “lean” governance structure that allows the Initiative to operate in a flexible manner.

Well into its second decade, GMI now faces challenges faced by many mature organizations:

- Decreased energy and engagement from many Partners that had been active participants and champions during the Partnership’s initial years;
- Staff turnover at Partner governments, and the accompanying loss of institutional memory;
- Changes in Partner government administrations that have resulted in decreased available resources and lower prioritization for GMI as other priorities and initiatives emerge;
- Lack of depth of leadership for the Steering Committee (e.g., lack of institutional knowledge or ability to provide back-up).

This has resulted in outcomes that are less than ideal from an effective governance perspective:

- The GMI Steering Committee officially comprises 22 Partner countries, but a typical Steering Committee meeting may only garner participation from 8 or fewer country Partner delegations;
- For several GMI Steering Committee partners, participation has been sparse in recent years, and for some, the Secretariat no longer has active contact information;
- With a co-chair model, when one Co-Chair is unable to participate in events or decisions, the other co-chair must effectively act as Chair;
- There is no transition plan to transfer institutional norms or knowledge to a successor Co-Chair.

With the current re-chartering process underway, it is an appropriate time to consider potential changes to the governance of the GMI to improve its effectiveness.

Question for the Steering Committee:

- What opportunities should be explored to improve the GMI governance structure?

Synopsis of Executive Task Force Discussions on this topic:

- The Executive Task Force did not address this topic.

Options for Steering Committee Consideration:⁷

Option	Benefits	Potential Limitations
1. Replace co-chair leadership structure with Chair/ Vice Chair leadership structure		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides continuity for the organization; i.e., the Vice Chair would be able to step into the role of Chair when Chair is not available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As government leadership and priorities change, Vice Chair may be unable to take on Chair position (similar to current challenges with co-chairs)
2. Expand Steering Committee membership beyond Partner country delegates: invite international organizations to participate in the Steering Committee		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases active participation • Incorporates diverse ideas from the methane community • Provides mechanism for closer communication, collaboration from key partners (e.g., UNECE, CCAC, IEA, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potentially changes dynamic for Partner Countries to discuss methane mitigation from government perspective • Would need to identify a subset of organizations that would be invited to the Steering Committee (could not invite all organizations)
3. Decrease Number of Partner Government Delegates to the Steering Committee		
Potential mechanisms:		
A. Retain only Steering Committee members that	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain only active members: participation is more engaged and consistent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain only active members: Potential to discourage re-engagement or new participation

⁷ These options are not mutually exclusive.

Option	Benefits	Potential Limitations
are currently actively engaged.		
B. Consider rotating membership: each Steering Committee member serves a specified term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rotating membership provides opportunity for more diverse participation as rotation allows for new members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rotating membership has the potential to lose support and engagement of active Partners once their term ends and they are rotated “off” the Steering Committee
4. Allow non-Partner organizations to serve as Subcommittee delegates⁸		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases active participation especially in certain sectors (oil & gas, coal mines) where large companies work closely with partner governments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Network members cannot easily effect change by governments

Internal Recommendations:

- Consider Chair / Vice Chair model for leading Steering Committee if willing Partner can be identified.
- Consider limiting the composition of the Steering Committee to actively-participating Partner country delegates. Explore the implications of rotational membership of Steering Committee to promote a more engaged membership.

⁸ There is some precedent for this; for example, Mexico had previously officially appointed PEMEX to be an official Mexican delegate to the Oil & Gas Subcommittee

ANNEX 1: Next Steps for the Global Methane Forum

Background:

The Global Methane Initiative (GMI) had planned to hold a large in-person partnership-wide event in March 2020 in Geneva, Switzerland, co-hosted by United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). Due to the global pandemic, the Forum was postponed. The Secretariat has been working to identify options for rescheduling the Global Methane Forum.

Rescheduling the Global Methane Forum: Considerations

- Timing:
 - As the global number of COVID-19 cases continues to rise, it remains difficult to predict when in-person meetings such as the Global Methane Forum might safely resume.
 - Several international in-person events that were planned for 2021 are already being rescheduled to 2022.
 - A successful Forum is dependent on robust participation from individuals around the world and should only take place once international travel and gatherings are safe, and individuals feel confident that attending the Forum is not a risk to their health.
 - An in-person Global Methane Forum should also, to the extent possible, coincide with another in-person event or meeting(s) in order to maximize attendance.
 - At the December 2020 Steering Committee, GMI Steering Committee members will be asked whether they support a UN Declaration for an International Year or Decade of Methane Management.
 - If the GMI Steering Committee agrees to supporting this Declaration, given it is unlikely to be possible to schedule an in-person meeting in 2021, the Committee will want to consider holding a virtual event before the UN General Assembly in September of 2021, in order to raise awareness of, and support for, the Declaration.
- Format: There are benefits and drawbacks to both in-person and virtual meetings.
 - **Virtual platforms** have emerged as a common solution to holding meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, virtual meetings have several drawbacks. It is challenging to sustain interest over a period of longer than 2 or 3 hours, much less multiple days, and, due to time zone differences, it is never possible to schedule meetings at times that are convenient to every participant.
 - **In-person events** provide a rich environment for interpersonal connections that can be sustained over multiple-day events. Historically, GMI partnership-wide events have been extremely successful in bringing together several hundred participants with diverse global perspectives, providing robust information sharing and networking opportunities. There is no virtual platform that can replicate the personal introductions and conversations that often emerge at in-person events, and the richness of in-person discussions and interactions. Because these

interactions are so important, an in-person event would be the preferred mode for the rescheduled Global Methane Forum, once it is safe to convene large groups.

- Location for in-person Forum: the United Nations Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland is the preferred venue for holding the Global Methane Forum, for many reasons:
 - *Accessibility:* Geneva provides a central location within Europe in the city that provides relatively direct access to North and South America, Asia, and Africa. Geneva is also home to other multilateral organizations such as the World Health Organization and the World Meteorological Organization, so there are opportunities to take advantage of their proximity.
 - *Venue:* The Palais des Nations is a historic, symbolic, and prestigious venue that provides space for large plenary sessions as well as smaller venues appropriate for parallel technical sessions, and offers interpretation into multiple languages. One limiting factor is that there are ongoing renovations at the Palais. As a result, room availability is expected to be limited in 2021 and beyond.
 - *Co-location with relevant meetings:* the UNECE Groups of Experts on Gas and Coal Mine Methane are well-established and have long collaborated with the GMI Subcommittees on Oil & Gas and Coal Mines, respectively; holding the Forum in coordination with these Expert Group meetings increases overall participation and leverages resources for both organizations.

Recommendations for the Steering Committee:

- GMI hosts a virtual “plenary” event in the second quarter of 2021 (e.g., late April, May, or early June) for 2.5 to 3 hours total. This event would showcase high-profile global leaders on methane. The objective would be to highlight the importance of action on methane globally; highlight GMI’s ongoing activities; generate continued momentum for GMI in the absence of an in-person Forum in 2021; and raise awareness of the International Year (or Decade) of Methane Management.

GMI tentatively reschedules an in-person Global Methane Forum in 2022, to be held at the United Nations Palais in Geneva and co-hosted by UNECE, with the explicit understanding that the event will not move forward unless and until vaccines have been widely rolled out and it is deemed safe for large gatherings and international travel to resume. (It is possible that the Forum might not take place until 2023, in which case the Steering Committee would consider what virtual events could take place in 2022). The Forum would be a multi-day event over the course of a week, and would include a high-level plenary session as well as technical sessions and subcommittee meetings, in coordination with relevant Groups of Experts.