

## PRESS RELEASE

### **EUROGAS GENERAL ASSEMBLY – VIENNA, 19 MAY 2005 WILLY BOSMANS SUCCEEDS ENRIQUE LOCUTURA AS PRESIDENT AND EU COMMISSIONER ANDRIS PIEBALGS ADDRESSES THE MEETING**

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**Eurogas, the European Union of the Natural Gas industry held its General assembly this morning in Vienna and elected Willy Bosmans of Distrigas, Belgium, as new chairman of the Governing Board and of the Executive Committee. Eurogas had also the great pleasure to welcome EU Energy Commissioner Andris Piebalgs as its special guest who presented important issues on current EU energy policy.**

Willy Bosmans was born in Antwerp, Belgium and studied electrical engineering at the Catholic University of Louvain, graduating in 1970. From 1972 to 1979 he assumed several positions in 'Ebes', one of the three companies which later merged to form the company Electrabel. From 1983 to 1988 he was adviser to the CEO of Ebes and from 1988 the Secretary General of the Management Committee of Electricity Companies. In 1995 he was named General Manager of Marketing, Administration and Finance at Electrabel. From 1999 to 2004 he was CEO of Electrabel and of Distrigas. Since January 2005 he is President of the Executive Committee and of the Board of Directors of Distrigas, and also President or board member of several subsidiaries of Electrabel and Distrigas.

Outlining the growing role of natural gas in the world, Mr. Bosmans observed the increasing dependency of Europe which is expected to import over 70% of its natural gas needs in the years 2010 and thereafter. He declared himself reasonably confident that the European natural gas industry would meet the future security of supply challenges provided that a number of conditions are fulfilled. Faced with major investment needs and a growing competition for gas between world regions, in particular the US and emerging economies such as China and India, Europe should create a supportive legal, policy and regulatory climate. European gas companies have to be able to compete on a global scale. Eurogas advocates a long-term vision of Europe's security of supply needs in a permanent dialogue between industry, the Commission, the Member States and other stakeholders.

In his speech to the General Assembly, Mr. Bosmans reaffirmed Eurogas' commitment to **"promote an efficient internal gas market with transparent and fair competition, taking into account the global nature of the natural gas business"**. Within this overall objective he expressed views on how to improve the future dialogue on gas market developments in the interest of Europe's gas consumers. He stressed that Eurogas members are confident of meeting the challenges of market opening while enhancing the dialogue with major producing areas, which he viewed as the basis for the security of natural gas supply.

**"One of Eurogas' major objectives is to continue a well defined representation and strengthened input of the gas industry in a wide range of European policies"**, affirmed Mr. Bosmans, adding in this context that he is pleased that Eurogas is being consulted by the EU Commission in the elaboration of the Progress Report on the Single Market.

Eurogas also recently finalized a study on the Customers' Switching Processes in the Member States to foster a well functioning and competitive market.

Regarding today's increasing environmental concerns, he underlined that gas is the cleanest fossil fuel and that **"Our organization will continue to demonstrate the significant contribution that natural gas and natural gas companies will make to climate change policy and other sustainability objectives"**.

Mr. Bosmans declared to look forward to taking up the challenge of the presidency of Eurogas. Messrs. Jean-François Cirelli, President of Gaz de France and Antero Jännes, CEO Gasum Oy, were elected as Vice-Presidents in addition to Messrs. Domenico Dispenza, Chairman and CEO of Snam Rete Gas, and Burckhard Bergmann, Chairman of the Executive Board of E.ON Ruhrgas AG.

The General Assembly endorsed a major restructuring of Eurogas Committees to make its organisation better equipped to address policy, legal and regulatory challenges.

**EU Commissioner Piebalgs**, as special guest, honored the Eurogas' General Assembly for the second time since the beginning of his mandate. He congratulated the newly elected President of Eurogas and stressed the important role played by gas in ensuring EU security of supply.

Eurogas is the European Union of the Natural Gas Industry representing the European natural gas companies and national federations of 21 countries towards the EU, all other relevant international institutions and stakeholders.

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