

## EURACOAL Press Release

### 3rd European Coal Days – critical issues examined in joint meeting of employers and employees

**Brussels (14 November 2012)** – At a high-level dialogue today in the Jacques Delors building, members of the European Association for Coal and Lignite (EURACOAL) had a joint meeting with the Consultative Committee on Industrial Change (CCMI), a body of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC).

EURACOAL and CCMI members focused on the situation for coal in Spain, the Czech Republic and Poland, with employer and employee representatives. EURACOAL President **Dr. Hartmuth ZEISS** thanked EESC President **Staffan NILSSON** and CCMI President **Jorge PEGADO LIZ** for their willingness to host a debate on coal. Dr. Zeiss pointed to the essential role that coal quietly plays in meeting Europe's demand for electricity, but warned that, "More investment was needed in many countries to keep coal production and use on a path of ever greater productivity and efficiency, lower emissions and technical progress." Ultimately, this would lead, he said, to the deployment of CO<sub>2</sub> capture and storage at coal-fired power plants around the world. Here, he called for, "Europe to show leadership, in the deployment of technologies – technologies that are relevant and affordable around the world."

The situation in Spain is pressing as the government must implement Council Decision 2010/787/EU on State aid to facilitate the closure of uncompetitive coal mines. A requirement of that decision is that if a mine continues to operate beyond the end of 2018, then it must repay all State aid received prior to that date. What this means is that Spanish coal mines which would otherwise be commercially viable before 2018 would have to close because they have no possibility to repay past aid. Regional government delegates and industrialists agreed that this is a nonsense and urged the Commission to revisit this onerous requirement so that Spanish coal mining can continue without subsidies.

From the Czech Republic, CCMI member **Dr. Renata EISENVORTOVÁ** explained that the brown coal mining industry there faces arbitrary mining limits and the revocation of sections on the compulsory purchase of land from the Mining Act. For the Czech brown coal mining companies, this creates an unacceptable hurdle to long-term investments; for some companies it is a critical short-term issue that, if not resolved, will lead to significant job losses in regions that already suffer from high unemployment.

Representatives from Poland included **Mr. Kazimierz GRAJCAREK**, Chairman of the Secretariat of Mining and Energy at NSZZ, the National Committee of "Solidarity", and **Dr. Maksymilian KLANK**, Vice President of EURACOAL. They outlined the unique set of circumstances facing Poland, beginning with its heavy dependence on coal for electricity production. Restructuring of the coal industry has been on going now for many years, always with the aim of ensuring adequate coal supplies at competitive prices. Productivity improvements have inevitably meant job losses and Mr. Grajcarek pointed to the social hardship that this has caused in Silesia. Retraining and incentives for new businesses were essential responses. However, Mr. Grajcarek expressed the frustration of workers in Poland who view the decarbonisation agenda in the EU's climate and energy policy as a self-sacrifice that does little to address the global climate challenge. Looking to

the future, Dr. Klank saw a need for investment in new and upgraded infrastructure in the mining and power sectors to ensure that Poland could continue to enjoy the wider economic benefits of reliable and affordable electricity from its indigenous coal while reducing emissions.

In all three member states – Spain, the Czech Republic and Poland – recent protest demonstrations illustrate that the issues discussed at the high-level dialogue are not academic: they affect people’s livelihoods and need to be solved as part of a pragmatic and rational debate on the future of coal in Europe. To this end, EURACOAL re-launched its strategy for clean coal during the Coal Days in which we outline three steps for a cleaner, more prosperous future with coal.

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## Note for editors:

- The European Association for Coal and Lignite (EURACOAL) represents the interests of coal producers, coal importers and coal users in Brussels. The Association has 35 members from 20 countries. As well as the re-launch of *A Strategy for Clean Coal*, the Association publishes *Coal industry across Europe*, a detailed review of the European coal industry with sections on the world coal market and climate policy ([www.euracoal.org](http://www.euracoal.org)).

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