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North Seas countries call for swift follow-up of EU Strategy on Offshore Renewable Energy

At today's Ministerial Meeting of the North Seas Energy Cooperationⁱ under the German Presidency, Energy Ministers and the European Commissioner for Energy agreed on key initiatives to be undertaken from 2021 to foster the deployment of offshore renewable energy. This includes the realisation of cross-border offshore wind projects that are interconnected among North Seas EU Member States and Norway (joint and hybrid projects) and the use of cooperation mechanisms including by landlocked countries.

In their Joint Statement in July, Energy Ministers and the European Commissioner for Energy had called for the development of an enabling framework at EU level, consisting of EU guidance to Member States on the implementation of cross-border projects, adequate electricity market arrangements, and improved and efficient EU financing.

Today, the new EU strategy on offshore renewable energy and follow-up actions were discussed. *“Regional forums like the North Seas Energy Cooperation are crucial for upscaling offshore renewable energy and hence for achieving our climate targets. Our strategy puts regional cooperation front and center, to facilitate multi-use planning of sea space, cost-efficient development of offshore and onshore grids and joint renewable offshore projects between countries”*, Commissioner Kadri Simson said. The strategy addresses topics directly relevant for the North Seas Energy Cooperation, for example by clarifying rules applying to hybrid projects and announcing guidance on cost-benefit sharing. The strategy also announced a scheme for joint long-term commitments per sea basin for the deployment of offshore renewable energy as well as a framework for long-term offshore grid planning to be proposed under the revised TEN-E Regulation.

“Expectations are high for the realisation of the first hybrid projects. We are looking forward to a swift development of an EU enabling framework in order to send the right investment signals”, German Minister Peter Altmaier said at the meeting. The potential European capacity of offshore wind energy by 2050 amounts to at least 300 GW according to the Commission, an essential contribution to reaching climate neutrality by 2050.



Since July, progress has been made in the North Seas Energy Cooperation in particular by further developing concrete proposals for hybrid projects, exploring ways for better coordination of maritime spatial and offshore grid planning, including multi-use, and preparations for a study on a long-term vision for the role of offshore renewables by 2050, including hydrogen. In order to improve coordination on the timing of offshore wind tenders, a new online tool has been launched. The tool makes timings of tenders comparable across Member States and thereby ensures both transparency and competition.

At today's meeting, the Presidency of the North Seas Energy Cooperation was officially handed over from German Minister Peter Altmaier to Belgian Minister Tinne Van der Straeten for the year 2021. Ministers and Commissioner Simson will reconvene at the next Ministerial Meeting of the North Seas Energy Cooperation in 2021.

¹ *The North Seas Energy Cooperation is a regional energy cooperation forum between currently BE, DE, DK, FR, IE, LU, NL, NO, SE and the European Commission to facilitate the integration of large-scale offshore wind energy in the European energy markets and a more coordinated offshore grid development.*