

PRESS RELEASE

An IEF Symposium

Tackling the Human Resources Crunch in the Petroleum Sector

13-14 April 2009, Doha, Qatar

The International Energy Forum Secretariat held a symposium on “Tackling the human resources crunch in the petroleum industry” in Doha, 13-14 April 2009. The symposium hosted by the Government of Qatar and held under the patronage of Deputy Premier and Minister of Energy and Industry, H.E. Abdullah bin Hamad Al Attiyah, brought together representatives from oil and services companies from producing and consuming countries, as well as representatives of educational institutions.

Opening the symposium and setting the tone for the event, H.E. Al Attiyah said **“I sincerely hope that we do not see an exodus from oil-related disciplines similar to that of the mid 1980’s”**.

IEF Secretary General, Noé van Hulst stated that **“an industry-wide deficit of skilled employees represents a critical bottleneck and long-term challenge to the petroleum sector”**. Referring to the near-term economic downturn he urged companies to resist the short-term economic pressures to implement cuts in jobs and training in recognition of the long-term nature of industry projects. Human capital and training must be viewed realistically as an investment - not as a cost burden.

The symposium called for concerted and innovative efforts to reverse the present structural imbalance in the market for skilled workers. Sponsorship of scholarships and academic chairs targeted at key engineering and earth sciences disciplines and a commitment to sustain training budgets as a fixed percentage of corporate income would send a positive signal of long-term commitment to prospective and incumbent employees if practised on an industry-wide and sustained level.

Company encouragement of involvement by senior staff in teaching programmes on a release or semi-retired basis was cited as an innovative approach to help stem the current brain-drain and supplement internal mentoring programmes to motivate staff and facilitate knowledge transfer.

Participants noted that the industry must persuade its detractors that it is part of the solution not the cause of the problem. Commonly held negative perceptions of the industry which leave prospective employees and the general public unconvinced of the industry’s long-term prospects and its suitability as a career choice should be challenged by better communicating **“the reality of the modern oil and gas sector as a high-tech, diverse, and environmentally conscious entity, integral to the long-term future of the global economy”** said van Hulst.

The IEF Secretariat will ensure that key messages from the symposium are developed and transmitted to the IEF Ministerial meeting and International Energy Business Forum in Mexico, 29-31 March 2010.

For further information on this or other IEF events please contact Simon Stoddart simon.stoddart@iefs.org.sa or visit www.iefs.org.sa