

Summary by the Session Chair

Vladimir I. Ivanov

The main conclusion of the session on environmental issues in the energy sector is that promoting the development of a natural gas pipeline system in Northeast Asia should be a priority of the Northeast Asia Economic Forum. There are three main reasons for this conclusion. First, Northeast Asia is substantially impacted by coal-related pollution and pollution levels are likely to worsen in the future. The introduction of much cleaner natural gas, in conjunction with greater enforcement of environmental legislation, would enhance environmental quality in the region, and save billions of dollars in pollution-related damages each year. Second the introduction of a natural gas pipeline system would diversify the energy mix, resulting in a more stable and secure energy system. Third, carbon dioxide (greenhouse gas) emissions from natural gas are more than 40 percent less than those from coal, per unit of contained energy. Therefore, switching from coal to natural gas can substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The development of a large regional natural gas pipeline system in Northeast Asia will cost tens of billions of dollars and requires the commitment of the region's governments if such a project is to be implemented. The main recommendation from this session is that the Northeast Asia Economic Forum support further analysis of the environmental benefits of the regional pipeline and report on this issue at the next Forum meeting.