

Gas exporters reject unilateral sanctions in Moscow summit statement

GECF warns tariffs, Mideast tensions threaten gas market stability

Economy Desk

The Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) said its members firmly opposed unilateral sanctions and the extraterritorial application of national and regional laws in a statement issued at their eighth summit in Moscow, while warning that tariffs and geopolitical tensions, particularly in the Middle East, could threaten global gas market stability and energy security. The summit was held on Tuesday with the participation of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Ale-Thani, Equatorial Guinea's President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo and Mohamed al-Menfi, head of Libya's Presidential Council, IRNA reported on Wednesday.

Other member and observer countries also sent representatives. Venezuela's interim President Delcy Rodríguez addressed the summit by video conference.

In their final statement, GECF members warned that tariff measures could undermine the efficient functioning of markets, reliable energy supplies and investment flows.

They also expressed deep concern over the effects of geopolitical developments on global gas markets, citing possible supply disruptions, greater uncertainty over gas supply and demand security, increased investment risks and sharp



price fluctuations.

Gas and the energy transition

The leaders described natural gas as important to strategies for mitigating and adapting to climate change, citing its lower carbon intensity and limited pollutant emissions.

The statement also reaffirmed the principle of "technology neutrality" as a fundamental element in developing the gas industry. It said the principle ensured non-discriminatory access to technologies, investment and markets, while

recognizing countries' right to determine their own technology development paths in line with national energy and industrial strategies, capabilities and priorities. The members pledged to deepen bilateral and multilateral cooperation, strengthen cross-border regional ties and facilitate trade in gas industry equipment and technology through measures including mutual recognition of certifications, technology transfer and localization of production.

They also called for diversifying gas trade and logistics routes through maritime and

land corridors, including by developing regional gas hubs and transit infrastructure. The aim, according to the statement, was to strengthen supply chain resilience, reduce risks arising from concentration and adapt to changing supply and demand patterns.

Long-term contracts, market security

The statement stressed the need to ensure fair value for natural gas in international trade, highlighting long-term contracts and varied pricing mechanisms, including oil-price indexation, as ways to share

risks more effectively, improve price predictability and reduce market volatility. The leaders also called for developing crisis-response mechanisms for gas markets. These could include expanded high-level consultations to assess external shocks, coordinated measures to ensure reliable supplies and more effective tools to support energy security.

The members said they would continue pursuing a realistic, fair and balanced transition toward a low-carbon energy system, with natural gas contributing to global energy security, economic and social progress, and a realistic climate agenda, while upholding technology neutrality.

They also emphasized stronger dialogue and strategic partnerships with gas-consuming countries and regional organizations, as well as engagement with the United Nations and other multilateral institutions.

The statement called for formal channels to address technical and market issues, ensure demand for gas, encourage investment and provide transparent, non-discriminatory access to gas markets.

The GECF has 12 full members and eight observer countries. Its members collectively hold about 70% of the world's proven natural gas reserves, account for 38% of commercial gas production and 42% of global pipeline gas exports, and supply an estimated 47% of LNG exports.

Annual inflation rises to 76.8%, statistics center says



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Iran's annual inflation rate reached 76.8% at the end of Mehr, the seventh month of the Iranian calendar year, which began on March 21, up 3.2 percentage points from the previous month, the Statistical Center of Iran said.

According to the center's report, the consumer price index for Iranian households reached 761.8 in Mehr, rising 4.4% from the previous month and 88.7% compared with Mehr of the previous year.

Year-on-year inflation fell by 1.1 percentage points in the sixth month compared with the previous month. The index shows that households spent, on average, 88.7% more than in Mehr last year to buy the same basket of goods and services.

In the same month, monthly inflation was 2.4% for food, beverages and tobacco, and 5.8% for non-food goods and services.

Iran's national currency, the rial, has fallen to record lows amid mounting economic pressure. It has traded at more than 2.7 million rials per US dollar on the open market in recent weeks.

The sharp depreciation has underscored growing strain on an economy already grappling with high inflation amid Western sanctions. The country has also remained on a war footing since a US-Israeli coalition launched attacks in late February, particularly targeting civilians and infrastructure during a 40-day conflict.

Threat of MOAB ...

However, the apparent objective of such an operation is to demonstrate resolve and lend credibility to the threat. What complicates the equation is Iran's determination to bring the cycle of war to an end. From Tehran's perspective, however, this cannot be achieved through surrender. This is an example of a hybrid crisis in which psychological, media and military instruments are deployed simultaneously. The threat to use the MOAB can be analyzed as crisis management through strategic signaling, which involves sending messages to multiple actors, including Iran, Israel, the US domestic public, China and Russia, to shape their calculations.

The escalation of the threat from public statements to operational preparations indicates that the crisis has moved beyond the pre-crisis stage and into escalation. In security crises, strategic ambiguity itself becomes a tool of crisis management, as the opposing side cannot determine how far the threat will be taken. This uncertainty encourages more cautious behavior.

The regional arms race can be analyzed through the lens of the security dilemma. Each country's defensive measures are perceived as threats by others, creating an endless cycle of armament and instability.

What implications does such a threat have for regional and international security and stability? To what extent could threats to use weapons with immense destructive power and target critical infrastructure, including energy facilities, escalate tensions and spread instability across the region? What responsibility does the international community bear in this regard?

The regional consequences of such a threat can be examined on two levels. The first is the normalization of threats involving weapons of mass destruction. This undermines international norms and lowers the threshold for the use of force and violence in the region.

The second level is intensifying arms competition. Persian Gulf countries, feeling increasingly insecure, would step up their military purchases, deepening the cycle of regional instability.

Israel stands to benefit from heightened tensions and, as the principal driver of the escalation, seeks to strengthen the

international coalition against Iran. From a legal standpoint, deliberately targeting civilian infrastructure constitutes a war crime and would entail international responsibility for the US and Israel.

China and Russia have also described US and Israeli attacks as unacceptable and warned that continuing along this path could push the region to a point of no return.

This situation lies at the intersection of a security crisis and a normative crisis, as military threats simultaneously challenge the legitimacy of international norms, including the prohibition on weapons of mass destruction.

The normalization of threats is an example of the erosion of the crisis threshold: something previously regarded as a red line gradually becomes normalized, making future crises more difficult to manage.

The regional arms race can be analyzed through the lens of the security dilemma. Each country's defensive measures are perceived as threats by others, creating an endless cycle of armament and instability.

What options does Iran have to counter this threat and prevent it from being carried out? How can Tehran strengthen its defensive capabilities and deterrence, remain prepared to respond to a potential attack and prevent its recurrence, while also avoiding a wider conflict?

Iran has options in both the defensive and political spheres. On the defensive front, Iran has significantly enhanced its missile and drone capabilities and preserved part of its air defense capacity through a dispersed and decentralized system.

Politically, Iran has come to the conclusion that the other side lacks sufficient commitment to diplomacy. The opposing side continues to rely on its assumptions about severely weakening Iran, its ability to control the Strait of Hormuz and its capacity to impose its nuclear demands. The issue is that Iran, contrary to the way it is portrayed in Western media, is

a rational actor. This rationality means carefully weighing costs and benefits.

In the security sphere, Iran could spring a security and operational surprise through operations targeting the world's internet infrastructure and other security-sensitive targets. Reports indicate that Iran has drawn up detailed plans to target undersea cables in the Persian Gulf. Iran's strategy is an example of asymmetric deterrence: using more limited means, including missiles, drones and threats to cyber infrastructure, to impose disproportionate costs on a stronger adversary.

A security surprise can be analyzed as crisis management through strategic ambiguity. Iran deliberately keeps its options unclear to complicate the adversary's calculations.

If the threat is carried out, what military, security, humanitarian and environmental consequences could be expected? How would such attacks affect regional energy security and the economies of other countries?

If the threat is carried out, the consequences can be examined at three levels: horizontal escalation, vertical escalation, and political and economic repercussions.

At the horizontal level, Iran's response could extend beyond attacks on bases in the region and reach Europe. Reports by The Wall Street Journal indicate that Iran has warned that, in the event of another US attack, it would target facilities beyond military bases, including airports, pipelines, and energy and communications infrastructure.

At the vertical level, Iran could attack the US naval fleet. Such an action would challenge a symbol of American maritime superiority and undermine Washington's deterrence credibility globally.

If Israel also becomes involved in this process, the consequences would become more complex. Israel is seeking to strike Iran's infrastructure, which would prompt a more serious response from Tehran.

At the political and economic levels,

attacks on energy facilities and critical infrastructure would trigger a major humanitarian and environmental crisis and undermine the legitimacy of US actions internationally.

Economically, experts have warned that Brent crude prices could reach \$150 per barrel if more oil facilities are damaged. In such a scenario, regional energy security, which is a backbone of the global economy, would be severely disrupted. This would be an example of a security crisis with multiple consequences, simultaneously affecting military, economic, environmental and legal spheres.

Could threats of this kind affect the security calculations of regional countries and their approach to the US military presence in West Asia? What role can regional countries and organizations play in preventing further confrontation and reducing the risk of a wider war?

Such threats have a profound impact on the security calculations of regional countries. They understand that any escalation would affect their own security and economies first and foremost. In this scenario, they would effectively become a shield for the US and Israel.

This situation has deepened divisions among members of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). These countries are being pushed to diversify their relationships and seek a balance among the major powers.

The strategy of balancing relations among the US, China and Russia is an example of crisis management through diversification.

A comprehensive diplomatic agreement remains out of reach. However, interim agreements on specific issues, such as the Strait of Hormuz and economic matters, could offer a way forward. This can be understood as crisis management through confidence-building steps, gradually reducing tensions through limited, implementable agreements.

This demonstrates that, in regional security crises, temporary diplomatic arrangements can serve as a tool for managing tensions.