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The United Nations Framework Classification for World Petroleum Resources

There is no universal mineral resources classification system thereby hampering information flow and complicating petroleum and mineral resource analyses. The United Nations Framework Classification (UNFC) for Mineral Reserves and Resources was confirmed by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 1997. Its principal function is to allow national terms to be maintained and at the same time make them comparable. A proposed UN petroleum classification has been harmonized with the SPE/WPC/AAPG classification, thus the proposed classification is unifying for worldwide petroleum resources. The main subdivisions are based upon the total recoverable petroleum resource base divided into three main classes, reflecting the status of the projects aiming to recover them: Reserves, Contingent Resources and Prospective Resources. In the UNFC, three independent categories, displayed along three axes, are established to further enhance the resource characterization. These three categories (axes) are: 1) the economic axis (E), 2) the field project (or feasibility) axis (F), and 3) geological axis (G). Each axis (Category) is divided into sub-categories that are numbered and codified into a worldwide reporting system, independent of languages. In the proposed petroleum resource classification the (F) Field Axis is subdivided into Produced Petroleum (from ongoing projects), Committed Projects, Contingent Projects and Exploration Projects to be consistent with the SPE/WPC/AAPG. The Geologic Axis (G) subdivisions include proven geology, explored and delineated geology, discovered and undiscovered accumulations. The Economic Axis (E) subdivisions include commercial (at standard economic conditions), contingent commercial and non-commercial subdivisions. There is a one-year testing and hearing period until October, 2003. The codification and reporting of these worldwide reserves and resources will facilitate financial, regulatory, industrial and business process management. It will enhance petroleum resource communication.