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## Qatar: dual success in helium market

press release

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### Air Liquide in the Middle East

Air Liquide is present in **Egypt, Lebanon, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria and the United Arab Emirates**, where the Group has established its headquarters for the Middle East region.

With **600 employees** in the Middle East, Air Liquide invested **US\$500 million** over the 2002-2009 period and **has an investment program of another US\$1 billion in the Arabic Gulf region over the next five years.**

### \*Helium in Ras Laffan, Qatar

After the discovery of the vast North Field deposit in the early 70s and the launch of Liquefied Natural Gas production at the Ras Laffan site in the 90s, the Qatari authorities decided to set up a plant to recover the helium contained in the incondensable gases extracted from the natural gas liquefaction units. Indeed, even when present at levels of about 0.05%, helium is of real economic significance given the size of the North Field deposit. **Qatargas and RasGas** are the main worldwide Liquefied Natural Gas market actors.

While **helium is scarce worldwide, the helium market is growing** steadily, by an average of +4% a year, due to the development of technology in many market segments such as medical, electronics, fiber optics, space etc. Qatar has been a major helium producer since 2005, and its position in the Middle East makes it an ideal supplier for both Europe and Asia.

In this context, Air Liquide announces that it has been awarded a contract by RasGas Company Limited on behalf of Ras Laffan Liquefied Natural Gas Company Limited (3) and Qatargas Liquefied Gas Company (2, 3 and 4), for a **large turn-key helium extraction, purification and liquefaction unit** to be installed in **Ras Laffan, Qatar\***. The new unit will be the **largest in the world**, with a production capacity of **38 million m<sup>3</sup> of helium per year**. The technology used to purify and liquefy helium at very low temperature (-269°C) is a **proprietary Air Liquide advanced technology**. For this project, Air Liquide will provide **the largest helium liquefier in the world**, which will be operated by RasGas.

This project arises out of the existing partnership between Air Liquide, RasGas and Qatargas, which was formed for the successful development of a previous helium unit on the same site in 2003. The **combined production** of these two units will be **58 million m<sup>3</sup> per year**, making **Qatar a leading producer of helium, with 25% of worldwide production.**

Moreover, under a long-term agreement with Rasgas and Qatargas, Air Liquide will be entitled to purchase **50% of the helium volumes** produced by this new unit. Access to this major helium source, combined with the acquisition of the international supplier and distributor Pure Helium in 2008, will position the Group as **one of the main players in the worldwide helium market.**

**François Darchis**, Senior Vice-President, Air Liquide Group, and a member of the Executive Committee, commented: ***"Air Liquide is particularly proud of this worldwide first, which demonstrates our capacity to meet major complex needs thanks to our industrial and technical expertise. Qatar is a strategic supply source of helium for the years to come and Air Liquide will significantly strengthen its worldwide helium supply position as well as its leadership in the Middle East."***

**Air Liquide is the world leader in gases for industry, health and the environment**, and is present in over **75 countries** with **43,000 employees**. Oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen and rare gases have been at the core of Air Liquide's activities since its creation in 1902. Using these molecules, Air Liquide continuously reinvents its business, anticipating the needs of current and future markets. The Group innovates to enable progress, to achieve dynamic growth and a consistent performance.

**Innovative technologies** that curb polluting emissions, lower industry's energy use, recover and reuse natural resources or develop the energies of tomorrow, such as hydrogen, biofuels or photovoltaic energy... Oxygen for hospitals, homecare, fighting nosocomial infections... Air Liquide combines many products and technologies to develop valuable applications and services not only for its customers but also for society.

**A partner for the long term**, Air Liquide relies on employee commitment, customer trust and shareholder support to pursue its vision of sustainable, competitive growth. The **diversity** of Air Liquide's teams, businesses, markets and geographic presence provides a solid and sustainable base for its development and strengthens its ability to push back its own limits, conquer new territories and build its future.

**Air Liquide explores the best that air can offer to preserve life, staying true to its sustainable development approach**. In 2008, the Group's revenues amounted to **€13.1 billion**, of which almost 80% were generated outside France. Air Liquide is listed on the Paris Euronext stock exchange (compartment A) and is a member of the CAC 40 and Dow Jones Euro Stoxx 50 indexes.