

International Energy Agency Attention on the Increase

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Maria van der Hoeven is raising the International Energy Agency's relations with Russia to a new level, showing what looks like more personal attention to the major energy producer.

Van der Hoeven paid her third visit to the country Tuesday since taking over as the IEA executive director in September 2011.

Her predecessor, Nobuo Tanaka, appears to have traveled to Russia four times in his four-year tenure. The organization's press office was unable to verify that number Tuesday.

The increased intensity of relations isn't going unnoticed.

"We do see that the IEA is ... building up cooperation," said Tatyana Mitrova, chief of the Center for the Study of Global Energy Markets at the Russian Academy of Sciences' Energy Research Institute. "It's quite a good sign that shows their attention toward Russia and the

country's role on the global energy market."

The IEA is an autonomous organization made up of 28 member countries, including France, Germany and the United States, that seeks to promote reliable, affordable and clean energy.

The trend is part of the IEA's policy of engaging non-member countries, especially major energy producers and consumers such as Russia, in finding solutions to shared energy and environmental concerns.

"We are doing much more practical work together now than a couple of years ago, so there are things to discuss," Mitrova said.

Van der Hoeven met with Energy Minister Alexander Novak and presented the agency's latest forecast for production consumption and trade of energy resources: the World Energy Outlook 2012.

She was scheduled to speak at an energy conference in Moscow on Wednesday.

At the energy outlook event at the imposing Energy Ministry edifice on 42 Ulitsa Shchepkina, near metro Prospekt Mira, she went through the report, showing slides, as Novak and some of the country's other industry officials and researchers watched and listened at a round table with her. Van der Hoeven said that energy prices were "stubbornly high" and remained a "brake on the global economy."

In earlier visits, she attended the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in June, and last year she presented the previous World Energy Outlook, which dedicated an entire chapter to Russia.

In St. Petersburg, van der Hoeven signed an accord with two leading entities in the Russian power sector — the Energy Forecasting Agency and the Federal Grid Company — to share data and best practices in order to improve electricity production and distribution in Russia.

During a meeting in Paris in October 2011, the IEA and the Russian Energy Agency agreed to strengthen bilateral co-operation on energy efficiency and renewables as well as overall dialogue on global and Russian energy market trends.

Van der Hoeven is expected to come back in spring, as she has been invited to the presentation of a forecast by the Russian Energy Agency.

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