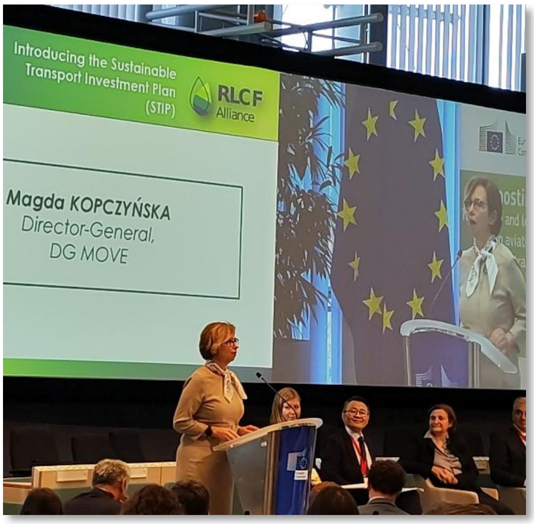
Report on the 4th General Assembly of the Renewable and Low-Carbon Fuels Industrial Alliance

The 4th General Assembly of the Renewable and Low-Carbon Fuels Industrial Alliance (RLCF Alliance) took place on 26 February 2026 in the premises of the European Commission in Brussels. Following the publication of the Sustainable Transport Investment Plan (STIP), the flagship annual event brought together close to 300 participants from the aviation, maritime, fuel and financial sectors, including industry leaders, national and EU policymakers and relevant stakeholders to discuss the challenges to scale up the production of sustainable aviation and maritime fuels as well as practical solutions to overcome these. In addition to hosting members of the RLCF Alliance, this year's event was also exceptionally open to a selected group of external stakeholders who are not members of the RLCF Alliance.

The agenda (available online here) featured keynote speeches and presentations, high-level panels, thematic workshops as well as updates on the ongoing work of the RLCF taskforces, while offering networking opportunities with the wider RLCF community. Key discussions focused on industry challenges, policy alignment, financing strategies, and project implementation for the sustainable transition of the aviation and maritime sectors.

Introductory statements



The fourth General Assembly of the Renewable and Low Carbon Fuels Value Chain Industrial Alliance was opened by **Magda Kopczyńska, Director-General of DG MOVE**. Ms Kopczyńska thanked Alliance members for their contributions that supported the Commission's reflection around the recently published STIP. She noted that the Alliance has evolved into a mature and diverse ecosystem spanning the full renewable and carbon fuels value chain, with strong engagement driven by the tangible value of members' contributions. Emphasizing on the importance to keep regulatory certainty for the fuel mandates for the aviation and maritime sectors, Ms Kopczyńska further highlighted recent EU policy and funding initiatives supporting deployment, encouraged dialogue with the EIB on financial mechanisms, and praised Member States' commitments under the **eSAF Early Movers Coalition**, calling for continued cooperation with governments and financial institutions. She emphasised that sustainable fuels are central not only to decarbonisation but also to Europe's strategic autonomy, noting Europe's strong innovation position alongside rapid progress elsewhere. Finally, she reiterated the Commission's reliance on stakeholder expertise to build a robust European ecosystem for sustainable fuels in aviation and maritime. In particular, she stressed the importance of sustaining collaboration beyond the General Assembly as a key platform for industry exchange on renewable and low-carbon transport fuels, and as an instrumental vehicle for the implementation of many measures announced in STIP.

High-level panel: Implementing STIP – challenges and opportunities

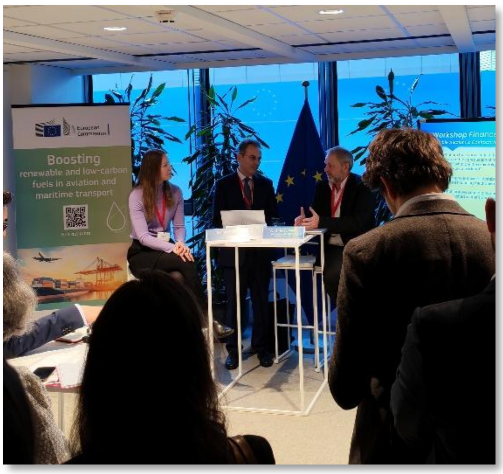
The General Assembly proceeded with a high-level panel discussion dedicated to the implementation of the **Sustainable Transport Investment Plan (STIP)** and its role in accelerating the deployment of renewable and low-carbon fuels. Composed of representatives from the Ministry of Transport of Denmark, the EIB Group, Cargolux, MSC Group, SkyNRG and of the European Commission, the panel agreed that Europe has the regulatory framework and industrial capacity to lead on sustainable aviation and maritime fuels, but rapid scale-up now depends on effective risk-sharing and swift investment decisions, supported by long-term regulatory stability. The persistent price gap between fossil fuels and sustainable alternatives, particularly e-fuels, remains the central barrier, and public funding alone cannot bridge it. Instead, targeted de-risking instruments, stable demand-side regulation under ReFuelEU Aviation and FuelEU Maritime, and predictable support mechanisms were considered as essential to enable bankable projects and mobilise private capital. The Commission reaffirmed its commitment to stable and ambitious regulation, warning that any signal of weakening would deter investors.

The session concluded with a shared recognition that Europe possesses the industrial knowhow and regulatory foundation to lead globally, but only coordinated, accelerated action will unlock the scale-up needed for 2030 and beyond.

Collaborative Workshops

The General Assembly provided the opportunity to attend collaborative workshops organised in parallel, each dedicated to one of the four categories of stakeholders involved in the Alliance: Finance, Maritime, Aviation and Fuel producers. These were moderated by each Vice-Chair of the Programme & Monitoring Group (P&MG) who later reported the main outcomes of the discussions during the plenary. Following keynote speeches in each workshop to kick-start the discussions, participants were invited to react to a set of guiding questions.

FINANCING | Double Auctions & Contracts for Difference in Action



The session focused on how Europe can accelerate the scale-up of sustainable aviation and maritime fuels through effective financing mechanisms. Participants evaluated long-term funding options capable of de-risking investments and enabling bankable SAF projects, through presentations and discussions on the ongoing work from Germany's

SAF working group (AG SAF) on double-sided auctions, and on UK-inspired contracts for difference.

Key themes included the need for investment certainty (e.g., stable regulation, long-term offtake), the role of double-sided auctions as a near-term instrument, and complementary tools such as Contracts for Difference (CfDs) to stabilise revenues until a mature market price emerges. The workshop highlighted core design challenges, such as price discovery in a nascent market, avoiding over-subsidization, and ensuring transparent, efficient allocation of limited volumes.

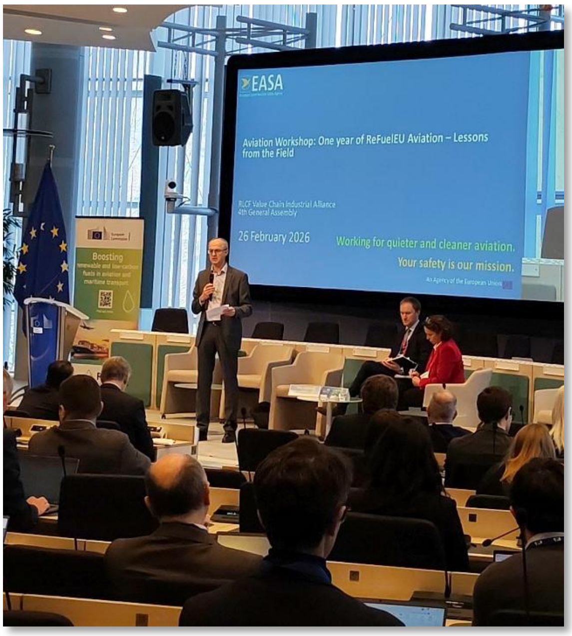
Participants discussed durable funding sources and the essential role of private capital alongside public support. The need for certainty was emphasized concerning which financing mechanism should be implemented to ensure that FIDs happen within the year time frame. The strategic opportunity for the EU to position itself as a global leader in sustainable aviation fuel deployment within the coming year was also highlighted.

MARITIME | Tripartite Agreements: Collaborating for Market Growth

The workshop focused on the role and feasibility of a **tripartite agreement in the maritime sector**, building on the discussions initiated by DG ENER on a tripartite for biomethane and following on the action identified in the STIP. Following a presentation of the status of the current tripartite agreement, discussions touched upon **permitting for biomethane plants as one bottleneck** for deploying renewable and low-carbon fuels in maritime transport. Stakeholders also debated **fuel pathways**, emphasizing the importance of all alternative fuels, such as ammonia, hydrogen and e-fuels, in addition to today's available biomethane solutions. The Commission confirmed that the Tripartite Agreement is broad and evolving, with an immediate focus on **securing biomethane at scale**. It also aims at ensuring that biomethane production becomes more widely available and does not concentrate in a few countries, and should support stronger **investment signals** to compensate for poor transparency between supply and demand. Participants also warned about **feedstock constraints**, though short-term biomethane potential remains significant. Persistent **regulatory fragmentation**, particularly uneven REDIII implementation, continues to distort markets. Digitalisation and simplification were highlighted as tools to improve harmonisation.

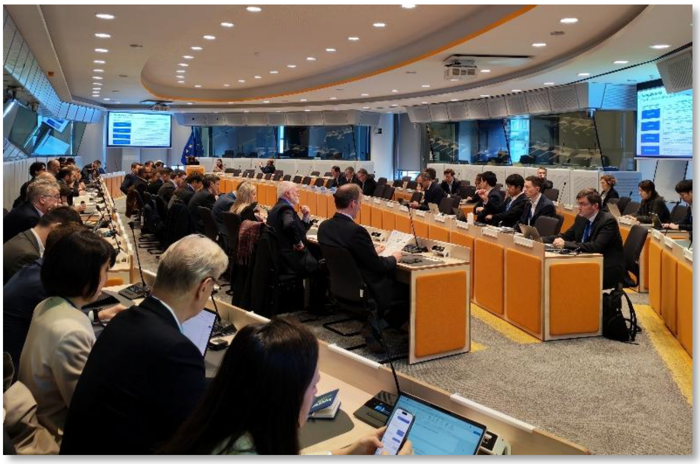
AVIATION | One year of ReFuelEU Aviation – Lessons from the Field

The session focused on the first year of ReFuelEU Aviation implementation, highlighting both positive developments and significant structural challenges. The Commission reported **strong early compliance**, expecting the **2% SAF mandate to be met in time by 2030**, supported by optimistic projections toward the **6% target in 2030**. Production of SAF and e-SAF is rapidly growing **outside the EU**, reinforcing the need to scale EU-based production for energy security and resilience.



A central discussion theme was the **need for public intervention to unlock e-SAF investment**, with the Commission reaffirming **double-sided auctions** as the preferred mechanism currently looked into to de-risk both producers and off-takers. Moreover, the discussion touched upon **market functioning issues** linked to price disparities between supplied airports, lack of price transparency and on administrative burden. Participants also highlighted the need to consider **incentives for advanced bio-SAF**, to support the production of these fuels in view of reaching the upcoming mandates.

FUEL PRODUCERS | Mapping RLCFs: Intelligence, transition & industry Strategy

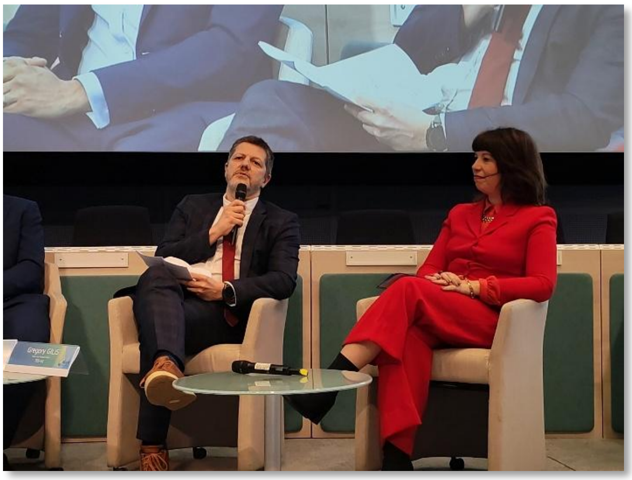


The workshop examined why Europe has a growing pipeline of renewable and low-carbon fuel (RLCF) projects but **very few reach Final Investment Decision (FID)** currently. Developers stressed that long timelines, high pre-FID costs and complex permitting remain the main obstacles while long-term regulatory certainty must be guaranteed to support the market. In particular, participants called for stronger implementation of RED III at national level and incentives for production of advanced biofuels and synthetic fuels. A key theme was the **strategic value of dual-use fuels**. Aligning civilian and military demand, through strategic reserves, capacity mechanisms or "Made-in-Europe" fuel criteria, could significantly boost bankability and improve Europe's resilience. Finally, participants discussed the need to consider the availability and production of fuels in a more **holistic, system-wide approach**.

Innovative pathways: showcasing concrete examples of RLCF projects

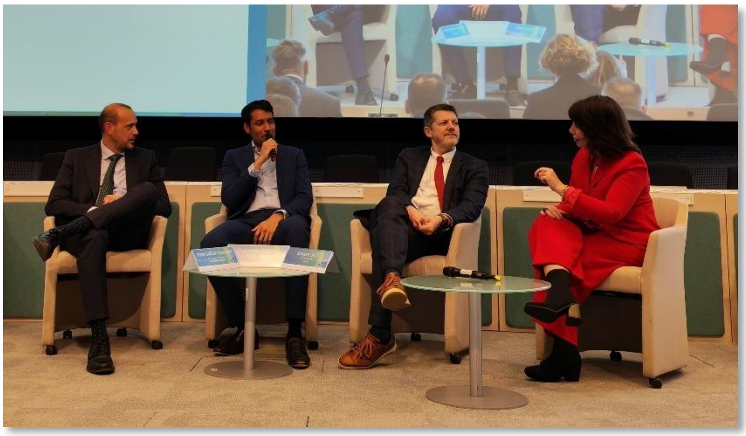
The session on innovative pathways showcased three first-of-a-kind RLCF projects at advanced development stages, illustrating the diversity of technological solutions emerging across Europe and beyond. The discussion offered insight into project design, challenges, investment needs and the regulatory conditions required to bring renewable and low-carbon fuel production to commercial scale. It also touched upon the importance of the location for such projects to guarantee access to cheap and renewable energies from different sources. The three projects presented were:

- **Compostilla Green**, a Spanish Power-to-X project led by **RIC Energy** aiming at producing eSAF starting in 2030. Its development integrates renewable electricity, hydrogen production, synthesis and CO_2 capture in a single industrial platform. The proponent noted that while Spain offers a strong permitting, infrastructure, and market context, the project's billion-euro investment hinges on regulatory stability and effective risk-mitigation mechanisms, with long-term offtake agreements remaining a key challenge as airlines transition to multi-year contractual commitments.



- **Luoto Energia** in Finland was presented by **Tree Energy Solutions.** It focuses on large-scale e-methane production as a pragmatic decarbonisation pathway for maritime transport. While the technological basis is mature and integrated with local grid-balancing needs, key obstacles include ensuring recognition of "virtual liquefaction" for regulatory compliance and securing long-term demand visibility well beyond 2030.

- **Arcadia eFuels** showcased **Project Endor**, an 80-kilotonne e-SAF plant in Denmark, one of the first commercial-scale e-SAF facilities globally to complete FEED. Work is advancing toward financial close, though progress remains heavily constrained by uncertainty surrounding long-term offtake agreements. Main challenges include regulatory certainty, competition for green electricity from fast-growing data-centre demand, high upfront costs for first-of-a-kind plants, and the difficulty for smaller developers to meet requirements for major support schemes or guarantees.



Across all three cases, developers reiterated that regulatory certainty, predictable demand signals and robust de-risking instruments (particularly double-sided auctions and Contracts for Difference) are indispensable for enabling FID within the narrow window remaining before 2030. Panelists also highlighted the need for strengthened grid access, coherent certification systems, functional Union Database processes, and recognition of Europe's existing energy infrastructure as a strategic asset. The discussion concluded with a shared message: early projects can succeed, but only if policy ambition remains intact and if financing mechanisms evolve quickly enough to match the scale and urgency of Europe's RLCF transition.

Fuelling Investments: Outlooks By Vice-Chairs of the P&MG

Reporting from the four thematic workshops they moderated during the morning session, the four Vice-Chairs of the Programme & Monitoring Group (P&MG) shared their views on investment needs and strategic priorities for renewable and low-carbon fuels, drawing on discussions held during the morning workshops.

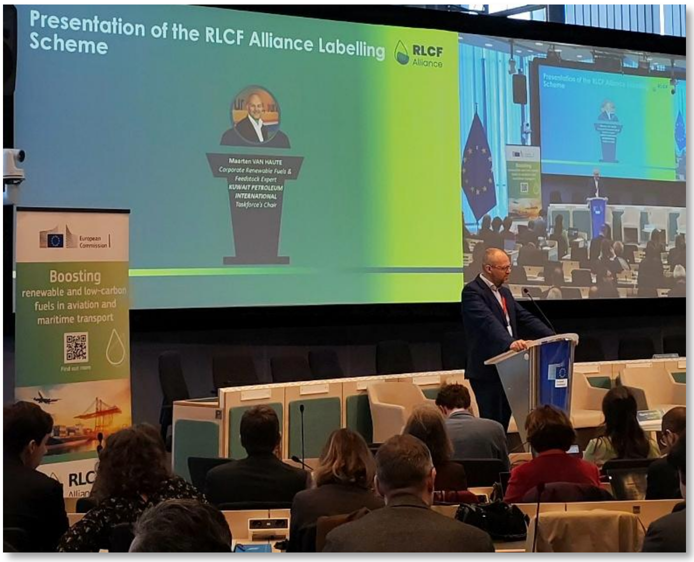
Nathalie Stubler, Chief Sustainability Officer at Safran, opened with reflections from the aviation chamber. She highlighted the growing interplay between the regulated and voluntary SAF markets, noting challenges such as the fragmentation of Scope 1 and Scope 3 crediting, fluctuating SAF prices across European airports, and the heavy administrative burden created by current certificate and reporting practices. She stressed the need for simplified processes, clearer price transparency and stronger traceability systems. While e-SAF remains essential for 2030 and beyond, she underlined that advanced biofuels should also be supported to bridge the significant increase required by the 2035 mandate.

From the maritime side, **Davide Cucino, SVP European Union & NATO Affairs at Fincantieri**, reported on the progress and potential of the tripartite biomethane initiative. He noted that the success of such an initiative depends heavily on active Member State engagement and on consistent implementation of existing EU policies. Biomethane is already demonstrating strong practical value, but he emphasised that the sector must simultaneously prepare for newer fuel pathways. He also stressed the need for more harmonised tools (particularly the rapid, functional deployment of the Union Database) as a backbone of a credible and integrated European fuel market.

Alessandro Bartelloni, Director at FuelsEurope, provided an overview from the fuel suppliers' perspective, confirming that a diverse project pipeline is emerging across Europe. However, he noted that the scale-up to commercial operation remains contingent on stable regulation, predictable investment conditions and technology-neutral frameworks. Beyond decarbonisastion instruments, renewable and low-carbon fuels are also strategic assets essential for industrial competitiveness, energy security and European resilience.

Finally, **Dimitrios Koufos, Head of Sustainable Business, Industry, Agribusiness & Commerce at the EBRD**, underlined the urgency of securing final investment decisions for projects producing renewable and low carbon fuels within the next one to two years if projects are to meaningfully contribute by 2030. He reiterated that public funding cannot meet the required investment scale alone, making private capital mobilisation essential. Predictable policy, long-term demand visibility and targeted de-risking mechanisms (including revenue-stabilisation tools) will be critical to attract institutional investors.

Presentation of the RLCF Alliance Labelling Scheme



Maarten Van Haute, **Corporate Renewable Fuels & Feedstock Expert at Q8 CORPORATE** and **Chair of the Labelling Taskforce,** presented the newly developed RLCF Alliance Labelling Scheme, one of the recent tangible achievements of the Alliance's taskforce work. The label aims to provide a clear, credible and transparent mechanism to identify mature renewable and low-carbon fuel projects capable of contributing to EU targets by 2030. The initiative is designed to increase visibility for high-quality projects, offer reassurance to investors and off-takers, and support policy discussions by highlighting projects that demonstrate genuine EU added value.

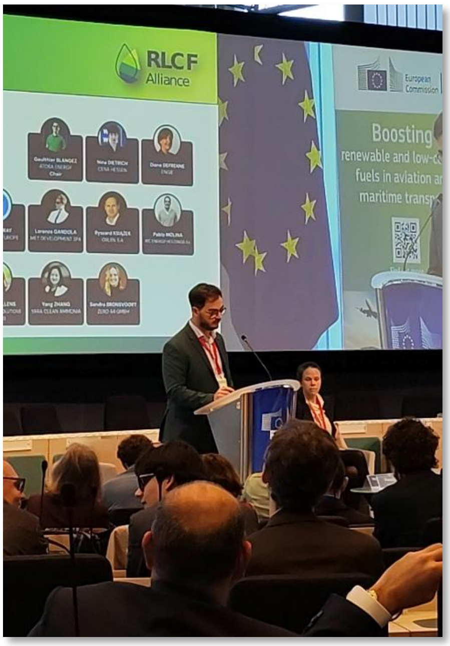
He outlined how labelled projects will be publicly showcased through a dedicated section of the Alliance website, promotional materials, webinars and potentially matchmaking events. Projects awarded the label will also be shared with the European Investment Bank, to explore advisory support in first place. He stressed that the scheme complements existing labels rather than replacing them, with a specific focus on RLCF-relevant pathways.

The scheme, with applications to be submitted through a standardised questionnaire on the Alliance website, is expected to open in the second quarter of 2026, with a review planned for the next General Assembly in early 2027.

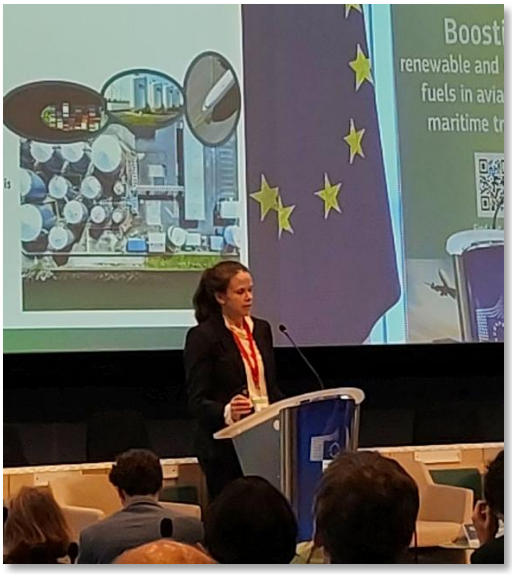
Updates of taskforces

The session continued with updates from three RLCF Alliance taskforces, each outlining progress and early findings in their respective workstreams. **Co-chairs Theodore Talbot**, **Head of Economics at the Maersk McKinney Centre for**

Zero Carbon Shipping, and **Eunice Ribeiro**, **Senior Public Affairs Director at STX Group**, jointly presented the state of play of the **Financing Taskforce**, which is focused on designing concrete, actionable financing mechanisms to support unlocking Final Investment Decisions within the narrow timeframe needed for 2030. The task force's role is to channel the practical experience of taskforce experts into a design that is effectively implementable under the EU framework and capable of de-risking investments while ensuring best possible spending of EU funds.



Gaulthier Blangez, Head of SAF Intelligence at Atoba Energy, presented the advances of the **Mapping Taskforce** as the capacity of Chair. The work includes developing a harmonised dataset, combining publicly available information with data voluntarily provided by members, and applying consistent assumptions to generate meaningful indicators. The resulting outputs (an interactive map, a clear methodology and an annual "in-a-nutshell" report) are intended to transform raw capacity figures into useful insight, helping stakeholders understand not only where projects are located, but how they relate to EU mandates and expected market needs.



Finally, **Maria Urheim**, **Business Developer at Norsk e-Fuel** and Chair of the **Infrastructure Taskforce** explained that the taskforce is assessing the readiness of both airport and port infrastructure to accommodate and distribute a major scale-up of renewable and low-carbon fuels. She stressed that multifuel flexibility is becoming a central requirement for ports, and that inland waterways remain almost entirely diesel-dependent, with slow fleet turnover delaying transitions. The taskforce is now refining its gap analysis and preparing workstreams that separate aviation and maritime needs to better capture their specific challenges.

Closing remarks

The General Assembly concluded with closing reflections delivered by **Eric von Breska**, **Director Investment, Innovative & Sustainable Transport at DG MOVE**, who expressed appreciation for the depth of discussion and the quality of contributions throughout the day that provided valuable perspectives on next steps for accelerating sustainable fuels in Europe.

He reiterated the Commission's commitment to working collaboratively with the entire membership of the RLCF Alliance. A new call for members wishing to actively contribute to the Programme & Monitoring Group, whose role in shaping the Alliance's annual work is central, will be launched shortly. He closed by announcing that the next General Assembly will take place on 9 February 2027 and invited all participants to continue engaging actively in the coming months.