

**Press release**  
**16 May 2006**

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***The European Commission has issued a Statement of Objections against Distrigas on 10 May, 2006. The Directorate-General for Competition alleges that the company forecloses the Belgian gas market through contracts which Distrigas has concluded with its industrial customers with a duration of more than one year.***

The procedure of the Commission must be seen within the context of the general sector enquiry it is conducting since 2005 on the functioning of the European gas and electricity markets. During the presentation of the preliminary conclusions of this enquiry, the Commission expressed the view that, despite the liberalisation, the national markets were still too heavily dominated by 'historic' players.

As a gas merchant, Distrigas' primary aim is to continue to meet the expectations of all its customers. Today, more than ever, customers are looking for competitiveness and visibility of prices as well as security of supply.

The industry sees these elements as essential in defining its commercial strategy, safeguarding the competitiveness of its products, planning investments and ensuring their profitability on a long term basis. In this regard, it is evident that the consumer should be allowed to choose the duration of its contract, that best suits its requirements.

The large majority of the gas sales contracts which Distrigas has concluded with industrial customers during the last few years have a duration of two years or less.

In the discussions which Distrigas will have with the Commission, it will seek a solution that enables it to continue to respond to the expectations of its customers.

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Distrigas is part of SUEZ, an international industrial and services group that is active in energy and the environment. Distrigas supplies natural gas to industrial customers, resellers and electricity producers.

In 2005, Distrigas sold 211,3 TWh of natural gas. Sales in Belgium totalled 171,8 TWh.

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