



Operator's operator: AGM Petroleum chairman Sverre Skogen

Photo: HAMPUS LUNDGREN

# Africa is a happy hunting ground for AGM's Skogen

Chairman of Minexco-AGR Energy joint venture brings a lengthy track record to the role and is excited by the company's prospects in Ghana

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**S**VERRE Skogen has hunted hundreds of wild animals on three continents. Now he hopes to hit the target with plans to explore deep-water areas off Ghana.

The 57-year-old engineer stepped down as head of drilling service specialist AGR Group a year ago, and has spent the past year as executive chairman of Norwegian independent Det Norske Oljeselskap.

After a longer-than-expected recruitment process, Skogen is now looking forward to leaving the reins to former Statoil executive Karl Johnny Hersvik on 1 May.

"Det Norske is an incredibly exciting company, with big projects such as Ivar Aasen and Johan Sverdrup and a lot of other activities, but I was never meant to be chief executive here," says Skogen.

While he will stay on as chairman of Det Norske and board member of some smaller Norwegian companies, including this publication, Skogen will now turn most of his attention to his new job as chairman of AGM Petroleum, a joint venture between London-based West Africa player Minexco and AGR

Energy. In December, the company beat more than a dozen rivals to become the preferred bidder for the 3500 square-kilometre South Deepwater Tano block off Ghana, and also holds a licence off Sierra Leone.

The work programme includes measures to help partner Ghana National Petroleum Corporation take over as operator after a number of years, including training, funding of new headquarters, and contributions to university-level petroleum education.

"When I started out in this industry, Norway was close to the level where Ghana is now, and I see a very similar situation in many African countries," says Skogen.

**Cost management** Once a promising cross-country skier, Skogen spent four years taking degrees in engineering and construction management on a skiing scholarship at the University of Colorado.

He stayed on in Colorado for another two years as head of the university laboratory, and left with an MBA degree.

Back in Norway in the 1980s, Skogen joined Norwegian Petroleum Consultants just as Nor-

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way's oil and gas industry got seriously under way. Specialising in cost management, he was involved in projects including Gullfaks, Oseberg and Snorre.

In 1997, he took the helm of the equipment and services player Aker Maritime, now largely a part of Aker Solutions.

For two years he ran floating production, storage and offloading unit player PGS Production, followed by eight years as head of drilling and operations specialist AGR Group.

"I have been lucky to get to work in the entire value chain of the oil and gas industry, including exploration, projects, equipment, technology, drilling and production — not everyone gets to do that," Skogen says. At AGM, the plan is to build on the work in AGR Group to become an "op-

erator's operator", working with local players in up-and-coming petroleum nations to enable them to become operators.

The company aims to bring its co-operation model to other African countries where the opportunities are promising, both in West and East Africa.

At the South Deepwater Tano block in Ghana, the plan is to drill at least two exploration wells next year.

**Contender** The targets have not been decided yet, but one strong contender is an extension of the same stratigraphic system that has yielded the Tullow-operated Jubilee oilfield farther north.

In addition, "there are at least two further oil plays", says Skogen. "If they are what we think they could be, we could be looking at two developments with FPSOs and subsea tiebacks."

If next year's drilling hits oil, a development could be ready for production in 2020.

AGM will have offices in London and Oslo as well as in Ghana, allowing Skogen to remain based in Norway. That will allow him to pursue his two great passions outside of work — hunting and skiing.

In the autumn months, Sko-

gen spends a lot of time organizing several reindeer hunting teams, which this year have a quota of 60 animals on the Hardangervidda mountain plateau. He also hunts elk and deer.

"The main part of the hunting is to harvest from nature — we sell most of the meat and keep some ourselves, we have several freezers full," he says. "It is rewarding for body and soul to participate in such a harsh arena, so mastered by the beautiful animals that thrive and survive in it."

The passion for hunting has also led him to travel further afield, to places including Tanzania and Alaska.

When winter comes, Skogen can often be seen cross-country skiing in the forests outside Oslo accompanied by his training companion Mira — "possibly the fastest dachshund in the country", Skogen says.

Skogen's skiing season usually includes long-distance races such as the 54-kilometre Birkebeiner race in Norway and the 70-kilometre Marcialonga in the Italian Alps, as well as some alpine skiing for variety. "It is important to do other things occasionally," he says. "You have to challenge yourself, otherwise you get stuck." 