

East-Med in the News

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Energy and Environment

News – Energy minister optimistic over Chevron talks – Cyprus Mail

Energy Minister George Papanastasiou on Saturday stated that both the Cypriot government and Chevron are highly optimistic that they will come to a mutually accepted plan over the Aphrodite gas field in Cyprus' exclusive economic zone (EEZ). The minister noted that "natural gas should start being extracted by approximately 2027 or 2028". Responding to journalists' questions on the sidelines of an event focused on energy cost reduction, organised by the Energy, Commerce, and Industry Policy Group of the Democratic Party (Diko), Papanastasiou said that letters exchanged between the two parties are not final, but rather obligations stemming from the agreement. "Some things need to be put in writing, but many things are being discussed through consultations. There is serious progress in the discussions. Both parties understand each other's standpoint, and I believe we are moving towards something positive," he explained. The minister continued by saying that "the Republic of Cyprus' intention is to further listen to the consortium, essentially represented by Chevron as the managing company of the field".

News – Apex increases Egypt oil and gas production – Middle East Business Intelligence

The Egypt-focused privately held oil and gas company Apex International Energy has increased its oil and gas production by 62 per cent since the beginning of the year, according to Thomas Maher, the company's president and CEO. The company's working interest production is now 11,100 barrels of oil equivalent a day (boe/d), 4,200 more than it was at the start of 2023. The company acquired oil and gas assets from a IEOC Production, a subsidiary of the Italian oil and gas company Eni, in the first half of 2023. Apex acquired all of IEOC's interests in the Ras Qattara, West El-Razzak, East Kanayis and West Abu Gharadig concessions, which it operates through Farah Petroleum Company (PetroFarah), the joint venture operating company of Apex and state-owned Egyptian General Petroleum Company.

News – Türkiye hosting Eastern Mediterranean-2023 Invitation Naval Exercise – Anadolu Agency

The Eastern Mediterranean-2023 Invitation Naval Exercise organized by the Turkish Navy, began in the Eastern Mediterranean, hosted by Türkiye. Ships, personnel, and observers from nine countries participate in the naval exercise that began Saturday. A briefing was provided to observers and press members on the Turkish landing ship TCG Sancaktar anchored at Aksaz Naval Base in the Marmaris district of the country's Mugla province. Rear Adm. Huseyin Tigli, the fleet commander, recalled devastating earthquakes that hit southern Türkiye earlier this year, underlining that the exercise would involve training and execution in search and rescue missions and the transportation of humanitarian aid. Tigli also pointed out that the TCG Anadolu would play an active role in the exercise. Turkish Col. Osman Diler also spoke during the briefing about the definition, participants, and objectives of the exercise. Diler said Eastern Mediterranean-2023 would continue in the Eastern Mediterranean until Nov. 25 under the command of Türkiye Navy. He emphasized that the drill aimed to simultaneously assess operational capabilities in the Turkish Naval Forces, as well as civilian and public institutions, NATO's Permanent Task Force units, and other countries under the command of the Turkish Maritime Force (TURMARFOR) Headquarters.

News – The War in Gaza and the Implications for Energy in the Eastern Mediterranean – The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies

The war with Hamas in Gaza and the clashes in the north against Hezbollah are inevitably affecting both the regional and global energy markets. Uncertainty is not good for economic markets, especially the energy sector. There have not yet been significant increases in oil prices, and natural gas prices have risen only marginally – but no major new deals are being made because the global energy market is waiting and watching, or showing "cautious nervousness." This is mainly because there are still high quantities of gas available in the market. Europe has managed to overcome the lack of gas from Russia

with supply from other sources (mainly liquified gas from the US and elsewhere), and European emergency stores are almost completely full.

Analysis – *What are the implications of Israel-Palestine war on the global oil and gas markets?*
– Offshore Technology

While the global energy market was still readjusting to the supply cuts by Opec+ and the aftermath of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine, an escalation in geopolitical tensions in the Middle East has kept the markets on edge since 7 October. Palestinian political and military organisation Hamas attacked Israel on 7 October, reigniting years of conflict between Palestine and Israel. Israel has been violently responding to Hamas by bombing the Palestinian Gaza region for over a month now, and the growing casualty toll has kept the commodities market in a state of unease. With oil prices surging to almost \$98 per barrel in mid-September following additional production cuts by Saudi Arabia and Russia, the International Energy Agency (IEA) highlighted the prospect of “higher for longer” interest rates due to fluctuating prices, slowing down economic and demand growth for crude oil in its October issue of the oil report. “Voluntary cuts are expected to keep the oil market in deficit as Opec+ could pump 1.3 million barrels per day (mb/d) below the call on its crude in 4Q23,” IEA said. Russian oil export revenues rose from \$1.8bn (Rbs174.41bn) to \$18.8bn in September, the highest since July 2022.

Security Issues

News – *Amir and President of Cyprus hold official talks session* – *The Peninsula Qatar*

The Amir HH Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and President of the Republic of Cyprus HE Nikos Christodoulides held a session of official talks at the Amiri Diwan on Monday, November 27, 2023. Talks during the session focused on ways to develop joint cooperation, especially in the fields of energy, economy, investment, education and tourism. The two sides also exchanged views on key regional and international issues, especially developments in the situation in Gaza and the occupied Palestinian territories. The session was attended by HE Chief of the Amiri Diwan Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, HE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad Al Muraikhi and number of Their Excellencies senior officials. On the Cypriot side, it was attended by HE Deputy Minister to the President Irene Piki, HE Director of the President's Diplomatic Office Marilena Raouna, and HE Deputy Official Spokesman for the Government of the Republic of Cyprus Yiannis Antoniou, along with a number of members of the accompanying official delegation.

News – *Erdoğan's visit to Athens and future of Türkiye, Greece ties* – *Daily Sabah*

In the realm of international relations, where disputes often overshadow cooperation, Türkiye and Greece find themselves at a pivotal moment. Traditionally viewed as contentious neighbors, recent diplomatic efforts suggest a potential shift toward a more collaborative future. The catalyst for this change can be traced back to what is now referred to as “earthquake diplomacy,” an unforeseen consequence of the tragic events that unfolded in Türkiye's southeastern provinces on Feb. 6. While NATO allies, Türkiye and Greece have grappled with a host of conflicting issues, ranging from militarization disputes over Aegean islands to maritime boundaries and the enduring discord over the island of Cyprus. These contentious matters have, at times, brought the two nations perilously close to armed confrontation. However, the current diplomatic phase of rapprochement signals a willingness to engage in constructive dialogue and overcome longstanding disagreements. Amid these challenges, both countries acknowledge the influence of external actors, particularly the United States and certain influential European Union members, in exacerbating their rivalry. Ankara contends that Athens, swayed by geopolitical interests in the East Mediterranean, often falls into the trap of external influence. Yet, despite these external pressures, leaders from both nations are poised to make renewed efforts to mend strained ties.

News – *'Window of opportunity' to strengthen Greek-Turkish relations, says Gerapetritis* – *Ekathimerini*

Greece and Turkey stand at a “window of opportunity” to strengthen relations, with the willingness of both nations' leaders proving pivotal in progress on this front, Foreign Minister George Gerapetritis has said. Answering a question from Turkey's state-run Anadolu news agency at a talk at the London School

of Economics (LSE), Gerapetritis underlined the importance of a “deliberative approach” in foreign policy. “I am very fond of the basic idea of deliberative processes not only in foreign policy but in everything aspect of life. I just aspire that anytime we have a dispute, it doesn’t eventually conclude in crisis,” he said. He stressed the need for open discussions and resolution, underlining the significance of diplomacy in navigating disputes. “We have jointly decided to leave aside our disputes,” Gerapetritis said, underscoring the belief that these differences should not hinder diplomatic dialogue. Confidence-building measures in defense and military will be vital in improving relations, he continued, noting that his government has appointed a diplomat to lead the confidence-building discussions between the two. It was vital to maintain the current calm in the Aegean Sea, he said. “What I keep on saying is that, irrespective of whether we resolve our basic issues concerning delegation of military zones, it is by itself important to extend the period of calmness over the Aegean for as long as we can.”

News – European and Middle East envoys meet in Barcelona to discuss Israel-Hamas war – Times of Israel

Delegations from European Union member states and Middle Eastern and North African countries met Monday in Barcelona, Spain, to discuss the crisis in the Gaza Strip, where a fragile pause in fighting is set to expire. Forty-two delegations are scheduled to gather at the event hosted by the Union for the Mediterranean, with many represented by their foreign ministers. The meeting is chaired by the EU’s foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, and Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi. Israel is not attending the meeting, which in past years has largely become a forum for cooperation between the EU and the Arab world. Monday’s gathering was supposed to focus on the role of the union 15 years after its founding, but it has taken on new significance since the massive October 7 Hamas attack on Israel that killed some 1,200 people and started the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip. Borrell said he “regretted” the absence of Israel. He repeated his condemnation of the Hamas attack, while calling on Israel to permanently end its assault, which he said has claimed the lives of over 5,000 children. Israel says it is striving to minimize civilian casualties but that Hamas is using Gaza’s civilians as human shields, an accusation backed by the EU and the United States. “One horror cannot justify another horror,” Borrell said. “Peace between Israel and Palestine has become a strategic imperative for the entire Euro-Mediterranean community and beyond.”

News – East Med described as potential flashpoint – Ekhathimerini

The challenges facing Greece and other countries in the region and Turkey’s increasingly aggressive role in the Eastern Mediterranean, with a tendency to become a powder keg for a number of reasons, are the focus of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) study “Turbulence in the Eastern Mediterranean” and analysis on the geopolitical and security situation in the region. “Since the mid-2000s, the Eastern Mediterranean basin, made up of Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, Israel and the Palestinian Territories, Lebanon, Libya, Syria and Turkey, has emerged as a key arena in which global geopolitical trends play out. In the past two decades, its mixture of powerful and fragile states, combined with its geographic position between troubled regions and stable ones, has drawn considerable regional and global interest,” it said. The study describes the Eastern Mediterranean as a strategic flashpoint making reference to nearly two decades of accumulated tension for a number of reasons. These include, among others, the many disagreements between the states in the region, but also civil wars, the ideological dimension (political Islam), migration, terrorism and the emergence of two revisionist powers (Turkey and Iran). The ambition of Ankara to advance its interests and relations with the West is prominent in the geopolitical landscape, according to the publications of one of the world’s most respected think tanks.

News – The East Mediterranean’s Shifting Dynamics: Now is the Time for Greater Cooperation – Modern Diplomacy

Nowadays, there is a growing awareness of the geopolitical importance of the East Mediterranean in its own right, as an arena with explicit dynamics of cooperation, competition, and conflict. It has all the characteristics of a distinct region, which however interacts and functions in complementarity with other regions and as part of the wider Middle East. The Israel-Hamas war comes to solidify this perception especially when taking into consideration that the East Mediterranean as part of the broader Middle East has developed dynamics of conflict that shake the regional foundations underneath. The establishment of a forum of political dialogue in the East Mediterranean that would not only provide a platform of regional cooperation but most important a framework for conflict mitigation and resolution is one way. It has been identified as a major geopolitical necessity long before the Israel-Hamas war by dialogue processes with most representative, the East Mediterranean Initiative (EMI), supported by the

Geneva Center for Security Policy. The persistence of unresolved maritime delimitation disputes has become coupled with conflicting claims over sovereign rights regarding hydrocarbon discoveries. In addition, some of the maritime delimitation disputes have been linked to ongoing conflicts like the civil conflict in Libya, to such an extent that conflict resolution efforts have become more complex. Also, the continuation of long-standing unresolved conflicts such as the Israel-Palestine conflict has been exacerbated by a long-year stalemate in conflict resolution efforts. These three trends constitute a troubling dynamic whereby conflicts are increasingly interlinked, with spillover effects like refugee flows.

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