

# THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

---

## Cyprus seeks amicable solution for maritime border zone

BEIRUT: Cypriot President Demetris Christofias said Tuesday that he would continue to seek an equitable solution for the maritime border zone dispute between the regional states once he becomes president of the European Union in four days.

During a regional conference on energy in Nicosia, Christofias admitted to the participants in a Q&A session that there are some complicated border disputes between countries sharing the maritime border zone, adding that these topics should be sorted out soon.

Lebanon insisted on redrawing the economic maritime border zone which it shares with Cyprus and Israel. The zone is supposed to have large quantities of natural gas.

Lebanon is demanding the U.N. oversee the demarcation of the maritime border zone in order to determine the country's actual territorial borders.

The government has not yet issued a tender to explore oil and gas offshore.

Energy and Water Minister Gebran Bassil, one of the speakers at the one-day conference, told participants that Lebanon insists on rectifying the mistakes of the maritime demarcation and stressed that his country wants another demarcation that will win the approval of the government.

Bassil said that dozens of companies have bought geophysical data that contains information on the reserves off the Lebanese coast.

"We can proudly say, thanks to these findings, that there is high probability for the success of drilling and exploration," Bassil said.

He added that Lebanon is determined to exercise its full rights over the entire maritime economic zone which belongs to Lebanon.

"We expect from our friends, the Cypriots, to make an extra effort to avoid the fatal technical mistake which occurred between Cyprus and Israel when the border zone between both countries was drawn," the minister explained.

Leading energy expert and secretary-general of the World Energy Council Lebanon, Roudi Baroudi urged the countries with claims in the area to focus first on what could be done without exacerbating tensions and then on how disputes could be resolved peacefully

“None of the countries involved can afford to have their economic fortunes sunk by gunboat diplomacy,” Baroudi said on the sidelines of the event.

“The value of the energy deposits in question is nothing short of gargantuan, so there’s plenty to go around. Negotiating mechanisms for dispute resolution and joint development wouldn’t be easy, but the payoffs – for all concerned – would be enormous.”

Baroudi’s comments echoed his presentation to the forum, which stressed dialogue and cooperation as a means of maximizing benefit from the Levant Basin.

“At average prices for the current year, the deposits in question were recently estimated to hold \$170 billion worth of oil and a staggering \$1.9 trillion worth of gas. For perspective, the latter figure amounts to 13 percent of all the goods and services produced in the United States in 2010,” he said.

Baroudi has urged all parties to at least start defining their Exclusive Economic Zones, and place their trust in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the International Court of Justice when it comes to adjudicating disputes over maritime boundaries.

Christofias said Cyprus’ role in the global energy map has been enhanced, following the discovery of natural gas in the island’s Exclusive Economic Zone. International interest for the second Licensing Round has increased.

“A total of 33 applications from 15 companies [and] joint ventures from 14 countries, including France, the U.S., Russia, South Korea, Malaysia, Italy and Australia were finally submitted. As a consequence, new perspectives are opening up, giving new impetus to Cyprus’ role within the global energy system and the European energy market,” the Cypriot president said.

He added that the eastern Mediterranean Sea region could be transformed into an area of common borders and interests for everyone, offering prospects for peace, prosperity and progress in the wider area.

“At long last, we have the historic opportunity to work sincerely, constructively and in good faith for the benefit of our people,” Christofias said.

---

**Copyrights 2011, The Daily Star - All Rights Reserved**

27/06/2012