

LEBANON: CONGRESSMAN MOHAMMAD KABBANI, CHAIRMAN OF THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON ENERGY

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Natural Gas Europe was invited on Wednesday 24th April to the Parliament of Lebanon where Congressman Mohammad Kabbani, chairman of the parliamentary committee on energy, gave a press statement.

Congressman Kabbani expressed his satisfaction with the enthusiasm that international companies have shown via their application to the pre-qualification round: 52 companies, from 25 countries, sent their applications, from which 46 have qualified. From 16 companies which applied for right-holder operator status, 12 have qualified: [ExxonMobil](#), [Shell](#), [Petrobras](#), [Chevron](#), [Statoil](#), [Inpex](#), [Eni](#), [Maersk](#), [Anadarko](#), [Repsol](#), [Petronas](#) and [Total](#). In addition, 34 out of 36 international companies won the pre-qualification as right-holder non-operators. Congressman Kabbani added that the Lebanese offshore area covers a total of 22,730km² in the Eastern Mediterranean and has never been previously licensed for hydrocarbon exploration.

Congressman Kabbani added that he was pleased to support the [Lebanon Oil & Gas 2013 Summit](#) organised by IRN, that took place on 22nd and 23rd April at the Four Seasons Hotel in Beirut and held under his auspices. Ambassador of [UK](#), HE Tom Fletcher, Ambassador of [Norway](#), HE Svein Aass and Hon Lord Howell, Senior Adviser to the British Foreign Ministry, Former Minister of State, UK were also amongst the attendees. The conference attracted a high level of international interest: attendees came from all over the world to assess the opportunities of the Lebanese Oil and Gas sector, to understand the challenges involved and to build a valuable network in the industry.

Congressman Kabbani highlighted the importance of the establishment of a National Oil Company that would be owned by the Lebanese State but regulated according to the laws of the private sector far from political wranglings. He gave the example of Middle East Airlines (MEA), the majority of which being owned by the central bank (99.50%) and employing around 5,000 staff group-wide. The Congressman believes that MEA is a successful and profitable company that is currently in talks to buy Cyprus Airways.

The creation of a sovereign wealth fund is second on the list of Congressman Mohammad Kabbani as he believes it would ensure transparency and accountability which is necessary for Lebanon's path towards prosperity. The Congressman also touched upon other issues such as the environment and the necessity of dividing the Ministry of Energy and Water into two separate entities given the new load of work that comes with developing Lebanon indigenous resources.