

“IN LINE WITH RECENT MEMORANDUM WITH LIBYA, NEW OIL, GAS EXPLORATION STUDIES IN EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN ARE EXPECTED”

12/5/2019

Energy and Natural Resources minister Fatih Dönmez made a speech before his meeting with miners from Turkey's various cities for International Miners Day in Ankara.

Turkey plans new oil and gas exploration and production studies in its maritime jurisdiction area in line with the recently inked memorandum of understanding between Turkey and Libya's UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA), Turkey's Energy and Natural Resources Minister Fatih Donmez said Wednesday.

Donmez told journalists that the agreement with Libya firstly needs approval from the general assemblies of both Turkey and Libya, after which authorization studies will be undertaken.

On Nov. 27, the Turkish Communications Directorate announced that Turkey and Libya signed two memoranda of understanding, one of which, the Restriction of Marine Jurisdictions, determined a portion of Turkey's maritime jurisdiction in the region.

"As with other areas, the companies that we will grant licenses to will start oil and gas exploration and production studies in maritime jurisdictions within the scope of this agreement," Donmez said.

He noted that Turkey has for a long time been conducting hydrocarbon exploration studies using its drilling and seismic vessels in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Turkey, as a guarantor nation for the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), is currently carrying out hydrocarbon exploration activities in the Eastern Mediterranean with two drilling vessels, Fatih and Yavuz, along with Oruc Reis and Barbaros Hayrettin Pasa seismic vessels in the same region.

Donmez summarized the exploratory work completed to date in the region. He recalled that four drillings have already been undertaken with the help of the two vessels and noted a fifth is currently in progress. The studies so far have mainly concentrated off the island's east, west and northern regions. However, he said the current drilling is focusing on regions to the south of the island.

He acknowledged that many parties intended to keep Turkey and Libya out of the game in the Eastern Mediterranean but added that the agreement with Libya, which Donmez said is in line with international maritime law, has ensured that Turkey is included in exploration in this region.

Turkey has consistently contested the Greek Cypriot administration's unilateral drilling in the Eastern Mediterranean, asserting that the TRNC also has rights to the resources in the area.

In 1974, following a coup aiming at Cyprus's annexation by Greece, Ankara had to intervene as a guarantor power. In 1983, the TRNC was founded.

The decades since have seen several attempts to resolve the Cyprus dispute, all ending in failure. The latest one, held with the participation of the guarantor countries -- Turkey, Greece, and the U.K. -- came to an end without any progress in 2017 in Switzerland.

In a statement on Sunday, the Turkish Foreign Ministry said: "Through this agreement with Libya, the two countries have clearly manifested their intention not to allow any fait accompli."

According to the foreign ministry, the agreement complies with international law, including the relevant articles pertaining to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

