

**ΧΑΙΡΕΤΙΣΜΟΣ ΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΕΑ ΥΠΟΥΡΓΙΚΟΥ ΣΥΜΒΟΥΛΙΟΥ κ. ΘΕΟΔΟΣΗ Α. ΤΣΙΟΛΑ
ΣΤΟ ΔΙΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΟΝΙΚΟ ΣΥΜΠΟΣΙΟ ΓΙΑ ΤΗΝ ΑΝΑΤΟΛΙΚΗ ΜΕΣΟΓΕΙΟ
ΞΕΝΟΔΟΧΕΙΟ ROYAL APOLLONIA, ΛΕΜΕΣΟΣ
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Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me to begin by welcoming to Cyprus our guests from abroad and to thank you all for participating in this very important symposium on “Regional Cooperation in Eastern Mediterranean Sea Research”, co-organized in beautiful Limassol by the Cyprus Oceanography Centre of the University of Cyprus and Haifa’s Leon H. Charney School of Marine Sciences.

As of today, nearly 40 Trillion Cubic Feet (Tcf) of natural gas have been discovered in offshore Israel, approximately 5 Tcf have been discovered in the Cyprus EEZ and, according to Lebanese officials, preliminary estimates from seismic surveys show resources of about 30 Tcf of natural gas in Lebanon. In the Cyprus EEZ, in addition to the Aphrodite discovery, we are cautiously optimistic for further discoveries in the near future, as over the next 12 to 18 months the exploration activities of our licensees will intensify.

Overall, the United States Geological Survey estimated in 2010 that hydrocarbon resources in the Eastern Mediterranean – i.e. the Levant and Nile Delta Basin Provinces – could be as much as 3.4 Billion Barrels of oil and 345 Tcf of natural gas. It is therefore becoming increasingly evident that the region truly is a new promising source for oil and gas supply, as well as a possible alternate transportation route.

However, in taking stock of the constantly increasing offshore hydrocarbon exploration activity in the Eastern Mediterranean, one cannot overlook the regional geopolitical developments, the continuing conflicts and the financial instability of some of our neighbouring countries. These are parameters that have the power to negatively affect further activities in the hydrocarbons sector of the region.

What is more, I am certain that none of us wants to see in the Eastern Mediterranean a repetition of the oil spill incident in the Gulf of Mexico, with its consequent negative effects on the marine and coastal environment. This was in fact the very valid reason why public awareness and demand for corrective action with regards to the risks involved in hydrocarbon activities, were significantly increased.

Based on the above, there is no denying that the collaboration between the region’s countries engaging in offshore oil and gas operations is greatly valued. Developments regarding the Eastern Mediterranean hydrocarbon deposits require comprehensive and detailed geological, environmental and archaeological surveys for hazard assessment,

risk mitigation and conservation of the regional historical heritage, in an interdisciplinary and trans boundary approach.

Distinguished participants,

Having this East Med Symposium as an excellent starting point, you, the scientists and experts in the various related fields and disciplines, must cooperate towards solving scientific issues and problems that arise or would arise as a consequence of the activities relating to the extraction of hydrocarbons in the eastern Mediterranean. Our common goal must be the environmentally safe exploitation of this natural wealth in the region, for the benefit of our peoples and, of course, of future generations.

In closing therefore, I wish you all every success in the proceedings of this East Med Symposium on “Regional Cooperation in Eastern Mediterranean Sea Research”. I have no doubt that the discussions you will hold here, in Cyprus, will provide a proper platform for solving mutual scientific queries, through a much needed interdisciplinary outlook.

Thank you for your attention.