EU adopts measures against Turkey’s illegal drilling in Cyprus’ EEZ

The European Union decided on Monday to symbolically punish Turkey over illegal drilling for oil and gas off Cyprus and threatened harsher sanctions in the future unless Ankara changes tack. Foreign affairs ministers of the 28-nation bloc met in Brussels to endorse a decision to curb diplomatic contacts and funding for Ankara, retaliation for what it sees as interference with Cyprus’ exclusive economic zone. Cyprus has pressed for a tough line threatening harsher sanctions in the future but others warned against antagonising a key ally on security and migration affairs. “The provocations of Turkey are unacceptable to all of us,” German Minister of State for Europe Michel Roth said on arriving at the talks. “We have now found a balanced language that keeps all our options open, including of course sanctions.” “I can

only hope that we do not now add another crisis to the many conflicts and crises. Turkey knows what's at stake and the European Union is united on the side of Cyprus." An EU diplomat told Reuters Ankara could lose some €150m of €400m the bloc had earmarked for 2020 for everything from political reforms to agriculture projects to help Turkey prepare for eventual EU membership. A decision endorsed by the EU ministers invited the bloc's executive and foreign policy arm to "continue work on options for targeted measures in the light of Turkey's continued drilling activities", according to the text seen by Reuters. That means any future sanctions would most likely focus narrowly on freezing assets and banning from the EU firms or people involved in the drilling, diplomats in Brussels said. "It is very clear that we stand behind Cyprus, this makes sense since we never recognised the Turkish occupation of northern Cyprus. It is normal for Cyprus to want to define their own natural resources," Austrian Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg said on Monday. According to the final text seen by CNA the 28 recall "the Council conclusions of 18 June 2019 and previous European Council conclusions, notably those of 20 June 2019", and "deplores that, despite the European Union`s repeated calls to cease its illegal activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey continued its drilling operations west of Cyprus and launched a second drilling operation northeast of Cyprus within Cypriot territorial waters". The Council reiterates "the serious immediate negative impact that such illegal actions have across the range of EU-Turkey relations. The Council calls again on Turkey to refrain from such actions, act in a spirit of good neighbourliness and respect the sovereignty and sovereign rights of Cyprus in accordance with international law". Furthermore, "the Council, welcoming the invitation by the Government of Cyprus to negotiate with Turkey, notes that delimitation of exclusive economic zones and continental shelf should be addressed through dialogue and negotiation in good faith, in full respect of international law and in accordance with the principle of good neighbourly

relations”. “The EU remains fully committed to supporting the UN-led efforts to work with the parties with a view to creating the conditions conducive to resuming negotiations on a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem”, the text reads. “In this regard, the Council recalls that it remains crucial that Turkey commits and contributes to such a settlement, including its external aspects, within the UN framework in accordance with relevant UNSC Resolutions and in line with the principles on which the EU is founded and the acquis”, the EU 28 state in the same text. According to EU sources, the Council will publish the text around 11pm Cyprus time. High Representative Federica Mogherini, refrained from commenting on the decisions during the Council’s press conference. (Reports from Reuters and CNA in Brussels) https://cyprus-mail.com/2019/07/15/eu-adopts-measures-against-turkeys-illegal-drilling-in-cyprus-eez/amp/?__twitter_impression=true