Ρούντι Μπαρούντι: Να Τερματιστεί η Σύγκρουση Ισραήλ- Ιράν, πριν το Κόστος της Γίνει μη Διαχειρίσμο

Σήμα κινδύνου για τις επιπτώσεις που θα έχει ο πόλεμος μεταξύ Ισραήλ και Ιράν, σε όλο τον κόσμο στέλνει ο ειδικός αναλυτής στα ενεργειακά Ρούντι Μπαρούντι. Σε συνομιλία που είχαμε μαζί του με αφορμή άρθρο του που δημοσιεύτηκε στους Gulf Times. Ο κ. Μπαρούντι εστιάζει στις ενεργειακές επιπτώσεις σημειώνοντας ότι «τα αποθέματα αργού πετρελαίου και φυσικού αερίου του Ιράν

είναι, αντίστοιχα, τα δεύτερα και τρίτα μεγαλύτερα στον κόσμο. Ενώ το Ισραήλ έχει εξηγήσει ότι οι υποτιθέμενες πυρηνικές δραστηριότητες του Ιράν ως τον λόγο.

για τον οποίο ξεκίνησε τον πόλεμο, οι επιθέσεις του έχουν επικεντρωθεί επίσης στις υποδομές πετρελαίου και φυσικού αερίου του Ιράν. Πέντε από τα εννέα μεγάλα διυλιστήρια πετρελαίου του Ιράν είχαν πληγεί και τεθεί εκτός λειτουργίας,

μαζί με αποθήκες και άλλες εγκαταστάσεις, ενώ οι ισραηλινές δυνάμεις προκάλεσαν επίσης μια τεράστια πυρκαγιά στο κοίτασμα φυσικού αερίου South Pars, το οποίο το Ιράν μοιράζεται με το Κατάρ – και το οποίο περιέχει σχεδόν τόσο φυσικό αέριο όσο όλα τα άλλα γνωστά πεδία φυσικού αερίου στη Γη. Επίσης οι ιρανικές επιθέσεις εναντίον του ισραηλινού συγκροτήματος διυλιστηρίων στη Χάιφα οδήγησαν στο κλείσιμο αρκετών υπεράκτιων πλατφορμών, μειώνοντας περαιτέρω την περιφερειακή παραγωγή υδρογονανθράκων».

Ο κ.Μπαρούντι εκτιμά ότι η κατάσταση μπορεί να επιδεινωθεί. «Η καταστροφή ή η διακοπή της ικανότητας του Ιράν να εξάγει, να επεξεργάζεται, να διανέμει και να εξάγει υδρογονάνθρακες θα προκαλούσε τεράστια προβλήματα στο εσωτερικό και θα ασκούσε ανοδική πίεση στις τιμές παντού, αν και ο παγκόσμιος αντίκτυπος θα ήταν πιθανότατα διαχειρίσιμος. Η κατάσταση θα ήταν πολύ πιο ανησυχητική εάν οι ισραηλινές επιθέσεις έπλητταν την περιοχή Μπαντάρ Αμπάς. Αυτό θα μπορούσε να προκαλέσει την εκτόξευση των τιμών του φυσικού αερίου – και άλλων μορφών ενέργειας – στις παγκόσμιες αγορές», τονίζει.

Δίνει μάλιστα μεγάλη έμφαση στα στενά του Ορμούζ καθώς συνδέει αρκετούς άλλους από τους πιο παραγωγικούς παραγωγούς πετρελαίου και LNG στον κόσμο – συμπεριλαμβανομένων του Ιράκ, του Κουβέιτ, του Κατάρ και της Σαουδικής Αραβίας – με τους πελάτες τους στο εξωτερικό.

«Ως αποτέλεσμα, κάθε μέρα, περίπου το ένα τέταρτο των παγκόσμιων αναγκών σε αργό πετρέλαιο και LNG εξέρχεται από τον Κόλπο μέσω του Ορμούζ, καθιστώντας τον το πιο στρατηγικά σημαντικό σημείο συμφόρησης της εποχής μας. Εάν αυτή η ροή σταματήσει ή ακόμη και επιβραδυνθεί σημαντικά, οι συνέπειες θα μπορούσαν να είναι καταστροφικές για μεγάλο μέρος του κόσμου. Αν και οι περισσότερες από αυτές τις εξαγωγές συνήθως προορίζονται για τις αγορές της Ασίας, ακόμη και μια σύντομη μείωση του διαθέσιμου πετρελαίου και φυσικού αερίου θα μπορούσε να εκτινάξει τις τιμές του αργού πετρελαίου, που επί του παρόντος είναι λίγο πάνω από 70 δολάρια το βαρέλι, πάνω

από τα 100 ή ακόμα και τα 120 δολάρια σύντομα. Αν μια τέτοια κρίση εφοδιασμού διαρκούσε για κάποιο χρονικό διάστημα, η παγκόσμια οικονομία θα εισερχόταν σε αχαρτογράφητα εδάφη. Όχι μόνο οι υπερβολικά υψηλές τιμές ενέργειας θα προκαλούσαν αύξηση του πληθωρισμού σε όλους τους τομείς, αλλά οι ελλείψεις καυσίμων θα μπορούσαν επίσης να παραλύσουν επιχειρήσεις κάθε μεγέθους και είδους. Μεταφορές και μεταποίηση, επεξεργασία τροφίμων και ιατρική έρευνα, παραγωγή ενέργειας, θέρμανση και ψύξη οικιακών συσκευών, ακόμη και το ίδιο το Διαδίκτυο: όλα όσα εξαρτώνται από την ενέργεια θα μπορούσαν να επιβραδυνθούν σε μικρό βαθμό. Μια παγκόσμια ύφεση σχεδόν σίγουρα θα ακολουθούσε, και δεδομένου του τρέχοντος εμπορικού περιβάλλοντος, αυτό θα μπορούσε να οδηγήσει σε μια ακόμη Μεγάλη Ύφεση».

Ο κ. Μπαρούντι καταλήγει ότι η πιθανότητα παγκόσμιας οικονομικής καταστροφής – για να μην αναφέρουμε τους οικολογικούς κινδύνους και τους κινδύνους για τη δημόσια υγεία που προκαλούν οι διαρροές πετρελαίου, πυρηνικών υλικών ή και άλλων τοξινών στο περιβάλλον – απλά δεν είναι ένας κίνδυνος που οι περισσότεροι έξυπνοι άνθρωποι θέλουν να βιώσουν. «Επομένως, αρμόζει σε όσους έχουν τη δύναμη να αλλάξουν την κατάσταση να κάνουν ό,τι μπορούν για να τερματίσουν τη σύγκρουση προτού το κόστος της γίνει μεγαλύτερο από όσο μπορεί να αντέξει μια εύθραυστη παγκόσμια οικονομία»

Roudi Baroudi Presents Latest Work to Patriarch al-Rahi

Maronite Patriarch Cardinal Mar Bechara Boutros al-Rahi received the international energy affairs expert, Roudi Baroudi, who presented the Patriarch with a copy of his new book, recently published by Notre Dame University-Louaize (NDU). The book explores ways to resolve maritime boundary delimitation disputes by peaceful means among the countries of the Mediterranean basin in general, and the East Mediterranean region in particular, especially between Lebanon, Syria, and Cyprus. It is grounded in the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, relevant international treaties, and the jurisprudence of international courts.

The true cost of ocean plastic pollution

The problem of maritime plastic-waste pollution first became apparent in the 1970s. In the half-century since then, the problem has become ever more widespread, as scientific expeditions conducted by the Tara Ocean Foundation (of which I am executive director) have shown. Large pieces of debris, such as fishing nets, and their disastrous effects on marine life, are the most visible symptom. Such waste is estimated to kill more than one million seabirds and over 100,000 marine mammals annually, often through entanglement or suffocation, and promotes transport of invasive species, triggering a cascading effect on the ecosystems in which they play a central role.

Less visible, but more pervasive, are microplastics, which have been found in the deepest ocean trenches and all types of marine life. Microplastics can, among other things, modify bacterial and viral communities and disperse chemical toxins in food chains (often after being ingested by marine organisms). Some of these toxins, such as phthalates, are

associated with the chemistry of plastics, while others, such as pesticides and heavy metals, are absorbed by the plastic before it reaches the ocean and enters the food chain.

How these toxic substances interact with plastics has been the subject of much study. Plastic is comprised of monomers that have been chemically bonded to form long chains of polymers – ethylene, styrene, and propylene become polyethylene, polystyrene, and polypropylene. But the process of polymerisation is often imperfect, and some of the unpolymerised monomers that remain in plastic, like different types of styrene and bisphenol, pose major environmental and health risks.

Moreover, other chemical additives, including plasticisers, fillers, colorants, flame retardants, and antioxidants, are incorporated into polymer formulations to modify their properties. And non-intentionally added substances (NIAS) – impurities, raw materials used in manufacturing, byproducts, and degradation products – bind to finished plastics. In most cases, because free monomers, additives, and NIAS are simply trapped within the tangle of polymer chains, rather than being chemically bound to them, they are more likely to leach out during the production, use, and disposal of plastic, migrating into liquids, gases, and solids. Some 16,000 such molecules have been identified, but their effects are still not fully known, nor is their toxicity, which can change depending on how they are combined. What we do know is that one-quarter of these 16,000 molecules are pose a hazard to human health or the environment by disrupting biochemical processes in living organisms.

Halting the flow of microplastics and toxic pollutants into the world’s bodies of water is a Sisyphean task. Nevertheless, scientists are trying to stem the problem. For example, the Tara Europa expedition, in coordination with the European Molecular Biology Laboratory and more than 70 scientific institutions across the continent, has spent the past two

years investigating how these hazardous substances make their way into the seas and oceans bordering Europe. The mission plans to share its findings soon.

But the generation of toxic waste and debris is not the only way that plastic can harm ocean health. The plastics industry has been a major driver of climate change, accounting for an estimated 3.4% of global greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions. Plastic production is on track to contribute 15% of GHG emissions by 2050, exacerbating global warming and thereby increasing the threats to marine life, which is sensitive to rising water temperatures.

Because plastic degrades the entire biosphere, not just the ocean, it is not a waste problem that can be solved by a few sustainability-minded citizens' recycling efforts. This is a systemic crisis that requires an economy-wide solution. A better approach is to understand plastic as one of the "new entities" that must not leak into the environment, a view initially formulated by the Stockholm Resilience Centre in its work on planetary boundaries and later endorsed by the United Nations. While acknowledging the impossibility of defining a precise threshold for harm, such an approach highlights the need for a drastic reduction in plastic use.

Research suggests that it would be economically feasible to halve global plastic production at a cost which would almost surely be less than the cost of inaction. But, according to a recent study by researchers at the University of California, Berkeley, even this reduction would not be enough to limit global warming to 1.5° Celsius above preindustrial levels, the target set by the Paris climate agreement. Instead, they found that meeting this goal would require a 75% reduction in plastic production compared to 2015.

‘THE POSSIBILITIES ARE ENDLESS’: ENERGY EXPERT LAUNCHES NEW BOOK ON RESOLVING MARITIME BOUNDARIES

ZOUK MOSBEH, 23-04-2025: Energy expert Roudi Baroudi signed copies of his latest book during a launch event at Notre Dame University – Louaize on Wednesday.

The book, “Settling Maritime Boundaries in the Eastern Mediterranean: Who Will Be Next?”, is part of Baroudi’s years-long effort to promote regional energy cooperation. In it, the author makes the case that if East Med countries are serious about exploiting their offshore hydrocarbons, they need to settle their maritime borders in order to attract the major energy companies whose technical and financial muscle are virtual prerequisites for undersea oil and gas activities.

Co-hosted by the Office of NDU Publications (which published the book) and the university's Office of Research and Graduate Studies, the signing event took place at NDU's Pierre Abou Khater Auditorium. All proceeds from sales of the book will go toward Student Financial Aid at NDU.

Inspired by the landmark US-brokered October 2022 agreement that saw Lebanon settle most of its maritime boundary with old foe Israel, the new tome stresses the need to define other East Med borders as well, including those between Lebanon and Cyprus, Lebanon and Syria, Syria and Cyprus, Cyprus and Turkey, and Turkey and Greece.

Publication was delayed by the outbreak of the Gaza war in October 2023, but the author says that conflict – which also led to massive destruction and loss of life in Lebanon – only underlines the need for regional players to find a new modus vivendi.

“We can’t keep doing the same things over and over again, and then expecting a different outcome,” Baroudi said during the NDU event. “For the first time in many years, all of Lebanon’s branches of government – Parliament, Cabinet, and Presidency – are fully functional. We have to start thinking of ways to reduce the scope for friction, to open the way for foreign investment, and hopefully start producing offshore gas.”

“Almost all of Lebanon’s energy needs are met by imported hydrocarbons; imagine if we discover enough gas to provide 24/7 electricity to all Lebanese,” he added. “And what if we had enough to start exporting it, too? Lebanon’s coast is less than 100 kilometers from Cypriot waters: this means that once the island and its partners have built a pipeline and/or a liquified natural gas plant, Lebanese gas could flow straight into the entire European Union, one of the world’s largest energy markets. The possibilities are endless. And now imagine all of the countries of the region having similar prospects – just because they finally got around to figuring out where their national waters begin and end.”

In addition to the manifold benefits of energy security and lucrative export revenues to fund domestic investment in things like education, healthcare, fighting poverty, and transport, Baroudi said the exercise of negotiating sea

borders could help build trust and good will.

“There isn’t enough of those commodities in the East Med region, and often for good reason,” he explained. “But we have to start somewhere, and maritime boundaries are a great place to do that because they open the way for investment and various forms of cooperation, direct or indirect, including fisheries monitoring and regulation, marine protected areas, tourism, weather forecasting, search and rescue, etc.”

With more than 47 years of experience, Baroudi has worked in multiple fields, from electricity, oil and gas, and petrochemicals to pipelines, renewables, and carbon pricing mechanisms. He also has led policy and program development with, among others, the World Bank, the US Agency for International Development, the International Monetary Fund, and the European Commission. The author of several books – including “Climate and Energy in the Mediterranean: What the Blue Economy Means for a Greener Future” (2022) – as well as numerous studies and countless articles, his expertise has made him a highly sought-after speaker at regional energy and economic conferences. Currently serving as CEO of Energy and Environment Holding, an independent consultancy based in Doha, he is also a Senior Fellow of the Transatlantic Leadership Network, a Washington think-tank. In 2023, he received the TLN’s Leadership Award in recognition of his efforts to promote peace.

ENERGY EXPERT’S NEW MARITIME BOUNDARY BOOK ARRIVES AMID

WAVE OF EAST MED BORDER DIPLOMACY

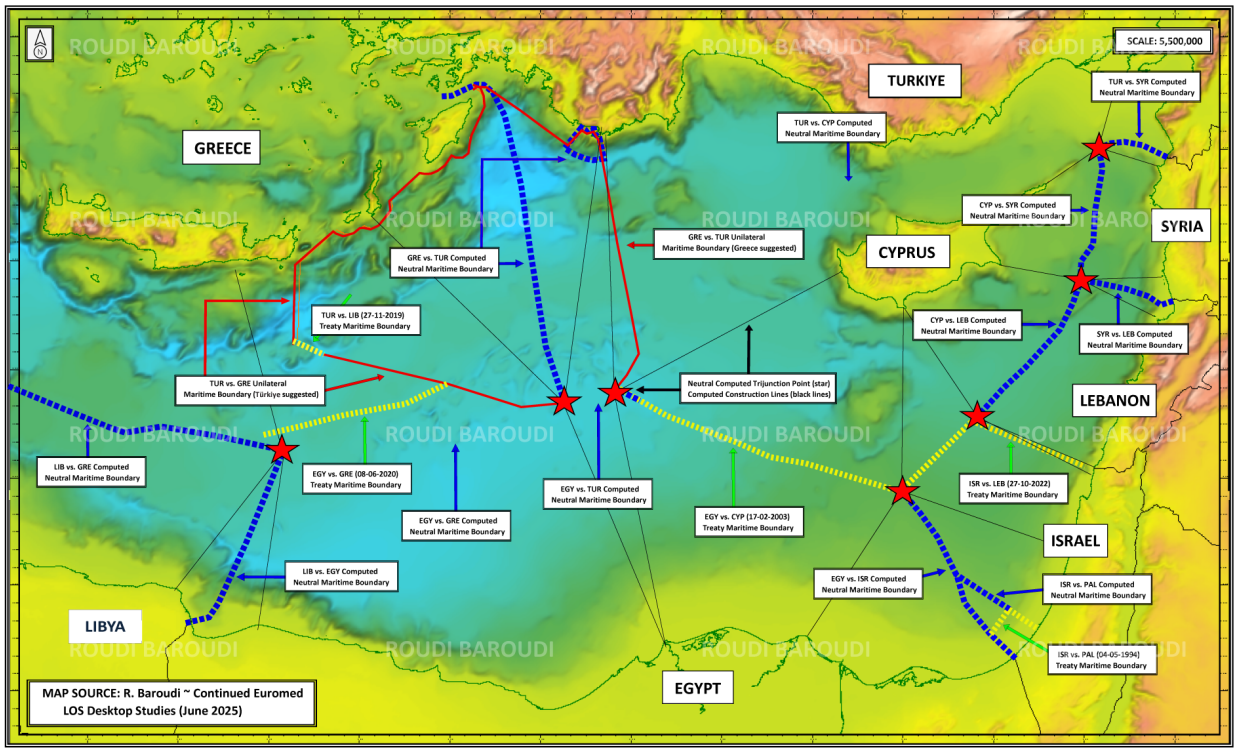
Recent weeks have been multiple contacts among several countries including – Cyprus, Greece, Lebanon, and Syria – aimed at increasing cooperation among East Mediterranean

countries.

This flurry of diplomatic activity provides the perfect backdrop as Notre-Dame University – Louaize is pleased to announce that it will host a book launch and signing on April 23rd, welcoming international energy expert Roudi Baroudi as he releases his latest work, “Settling Maritime Boundaries in the Eastern Mediterranean: Who Will Be Next? ”

The book outlines the need for countries in the region to resolve their maritime boundaries, the energy and other economic opportunities that doing so could open up, and the legal, scientific, and technical means of ensuring that delimitation is fair and equitable. The volume even carries exclusive, high-precision maps indicating with unprecedented accuracy where the negotiated or adjudicated sea borders of several East Med countries would be, as per United Nations rules.

EURO MED RESOLVED & UNRESOLVED MBL 2025

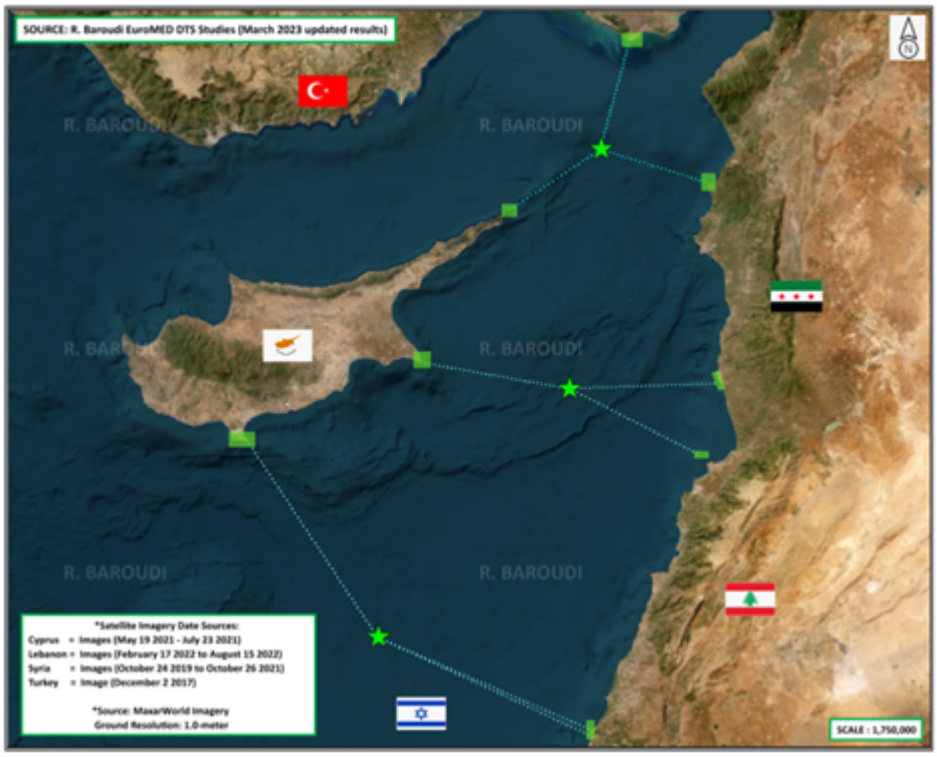


Yellow lines - Fully Treated MBs.
Dark Blue dashed lines - 100% neutral strict equidistance lines (unresolved/disputed)
Red solid lines - Unilateral Claimed MBL

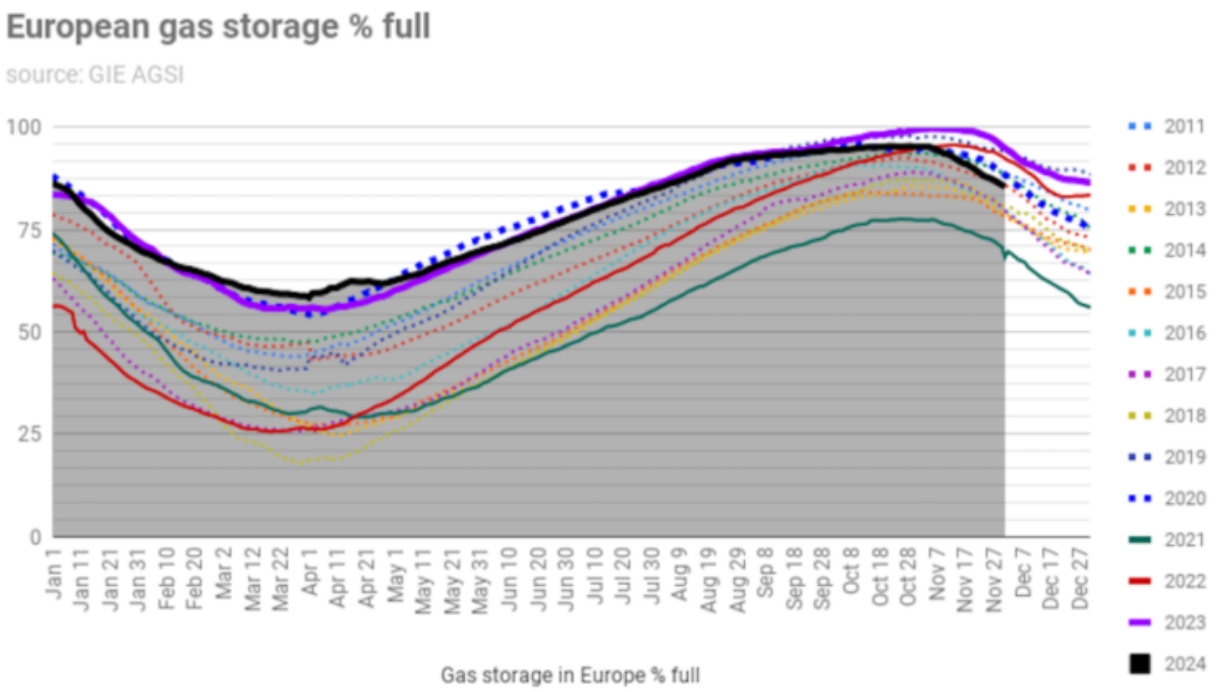
The book emphasizes that settling these unresolved boundaries – including those between Lebanon and Cyprus, Lebanon and Syria, Greece and Turkey, Turkey and Syria, Syria and Cyprus, and Turkey and Cyprus – is a necessary first step for those seeking to develop offshore energy resources. The advent of energy security and possible lucrative exports could have a profound effect on several states, allowing them to make historic investments in schools, hospitals, and transport infrastructure, all while creating well-paying jobs and reducing poverty and inequality. Baroudi also highlights a series of cross-border benefits, including reducing potential irritants between neighbors, building trust, and opening up new avenues for cooperation.

As a 47-year veteran of the energy industry, Baroudi has a wealth of experience to share, and does so frequently as an author and speaker, promoting energy as a catalyst for dialogue and peace wherever and whenever he can. He will be on hand for the launch at NDU's Pierre Abou Khater Auditorium beginning at 12:00 noon, answering questions and signing copies of the book for anyone who purchases one.

All sale proceeds will go toward Student Financial Aid at NDU.



Europe gas storage concerns fuel market uncertainty



The gas held in storage covers about 30% of the EU's daily needs during the winter, rising to 50% on the chilliest days

The relatively low amount of gas in storage in the European Union – with levels 36% below where they were this time last year – is putting upward pressure on prices, according to the International Energy Agency.

Europe's stockpiles of natural gas have been a closely watched metric since the invasion of Ukraine triggered a dramatic downturn in Russian supply to the region.

The network of gas storage sites across the European Union is the second largest in the world after the US and has become an increasingly important buffer against supply shocks and price spikes.

As Moscow squeezed the flow of pipeline gas, the EU had managed to avoid a winter supply crunch by curtailing overall gas demand and boosting its imports of liquefied natural gas.

But 2025 could up the pressure.

Europe leans on its gas inventories in the winter, when average consumption doubles as the heating is turned up.

While the continent's gas suppliers – from Norway and Algeria to Qatar and the US – typically boost their production to maximum levels, it's not enough to meet the increased demand.

As a result, the gas held in storage covers about 30% of the EU's daily needs during the winter. This proportion can top 50% on the chilliest days, especially if wind speeds are low and electricity output from renewable sources slumps.

The energy crisis sparked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine saw the EU introduce legally binding targets for gas storage across the bloc from 2022. This was to ensure security of supply.

Inventories must be at least 90% full by November 1 and there are also interim milestones to be met in February, May, July and September. Some countries fell short of their goals in February 2025.

The five-year agreement allowing Russian gas to transit through Ukraine and into Europe expired at the end of 2024. Prior to the deal coming to an end, the route had accounted for less than 5% of Europe's gas needs, down from more than 15% at the start of the accord.

Moscow didn't completely turn off the taps to the region; Russian pipeline gas is still flowing via the TurkStream line through Turkiye.

If US President Donald Trump succeeds in brokering a peace deal between Russia and Ukraine, there's a possibility that the transit agreement could be revived.

The EU's gas stockpiles quickly depleted over the 2024-25 heating season. Colder weather than a year earlier and more windless days increased demand for gas and forced countries to tap their storage.

Combined with the loss of Russian pipeline gas via Ukraine, the bloc's depots were only 44% full in mid-February, well below the 65% seen a year prior and the lowest level for this time of year since the 2022 energy crisis.

There's no immediate threat of Europe running out of gas, but there are concerns about the pace of storage refills needed to be ready for the next winter.

Fears over how Europe will replenish its storage stoked a surge in the price of summer gas contracts and drove near-term prices to a two-year high on February 10. In turn, energy

bills have remained elevated, prolonging pain for Europe’s households and businesses, just as recession risks are back in focus for the likes of Germany and the UK.
European consumers and governments are now entering their fourth year of high and volatile gas prices.
If a peace deal is reached between Russia and Ukraine, it could revive the transit of gas via that route into Europe. Whether the EU would return to importing Russian pipeline gas remains to be seen.
It’s unlikely the bloc would want to relinquish control of its energy security back to Moscow.

MPHC plans to invest QR2.5bnin capital expenditure overnext five years

MPHC spent QR415mn in 2024 on maintenance, safety, and environmental projects, including its share in a new PVC plant (QR219mn last year)

Mesaieed Petrochemical Holding Company plans to invest QR2.5bn in capital expenditure over the next five years, Abdulla Yaaqob al-Hay, manager, Privatised Companies Affairs at QatarEnergy, said at the MPHC Annual General Assembly on Monday.

He said MPHC spent QR415mn in 2024 on maintenance, safety, and environmental projects, including its share in a new PVC plant (QR219mn last year).

The project is progressing as per the timetable for completion by second half of 2025, with a capacity of 350,000 tonnes per

year.

Furthermore, in the petrochemical segment, capital expenditure for this year focused on several key projects aimed at enhancing operational efficiency and sustainability, while upholding the best standards for HSE.

In addition to adding value for shareholders and attracting investment opportunities, the Group has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with key stakeholders to develop a state-of-the-art salt production facility under QatarEnergy's TAWTEEN localisation programme.

This facility will produce industrial and food-grade salt, ensuring Qatar's self-sufficiency and supporting the local market. The Group is currently in the feasibility study phase and will announce progress in the future.

In 2024, MPHC maintained its excellent HSE record, receiving international certifications, improving process safety, and achieving 17 consecutive years without heat-stress incidents at some facilities.

MPHC, he said, remains committed to maintaining its position as a low-cost operator without compromising HSE standards.

In his opening remarks, Ahmad Saif al-Sulaiti, Chairman, MPHC said, "In 2024, uncertainty and oversupply challenges persisted, complicating margin evolution amid softened global demand. Energy and commodity prices decelerated as global supply was restored, easing supply chain bottlenecks and allowing producers to restart capacities. This added pressure on global markets and influenced price trajectories.

"Additionally, hawkish monetary policies to combat inflation led to high-interest rates, impacting global GDP, reducing consumer spending, and affecting demand for most commodities. Despite these hurdles, global downstream demand began to stabilise during the second half of the year."

He noted the supply and demand environment were impacted by several factors throughout the year. Notably, the global economic environment presented challenges, particularly in the first half of the year, which constrained consumer purchasing power and softened demand.

Despite challenging macroeconomic conditions, MPHC demonstrated resilience and agility, achieving commendable results throughout 2024, even with segmental shutdowns.

These turnarounds were essential to ensure the long-term reliability and efficiency of the assets, and maintaining the competitive edge in the market.

“Our dedication to HSE, product quality, and comprehensive employee safety remains unwavering, ensuring operational reliability in accordance with international standards,” al-Sulaiti said.

MPHC achieved a net profit of QR719mn in 2024 and recorded an earnings per share (EPS) of QR0.057.

Considering the current market projections in both the medium and short terms, as well as the company’s capital spending and operational programs, the Company’s Board of Directors proposed a second half 2024 dividend distribution of QR377mn, equivalent to QR0.03 per share.

This brings the annual dividend distribution to QR0.057 per share for the full year. This dividend represents a 100% net earnings payout ratio.

Trump’s move to exit Paris accord to hit harder than last time

This US withdrawal will take effect in one year, faster than the 3.5-year exit period when Trump first quit the accord.

A second US withdrawal from the world’s primary climate pact will have a bigger impact – in the US and globally – than the country’s first retreat in 2017, according to analysts and diplomats. One of President Donald Trump’s first acts on returning to office on Monday was to quit the Paris Agreement as part of his plans to halt US climate action.

The impact will be to increase the chance of global warming escalating, to slow US climate funding internationally, and leave investors struggling to navigate the divergence between European and US green rules.

This US withdrawal will take effect in one year, faster than the 3.5-year exit period when Trump first quit the Paris accord in 2017.

Since then, climate change has become more extreme. Last year

was the planet's hottest on record, and the first in which the average global temperature exceeded 1.5C (2.7F) of warming – the limit the Paris Agreement commits countries to trying to stay below.

"We are looking at overshooting 1.5C – that is becoming very, very likely," said law professor Christina Voigt at the University of Oslo.

"Which, of course, brings to the forefront that much more ambitious global action on climate change is needed," she said.

Today's climate, measured over decades, is 1.3C warmer than in pre-industrial times, and on track for at least 2.7C of warming this century. While perilous, that is less severe than the 4C projected before countries negotiated the 2015 Paris Agreement. Each country's pledge toward the Paris goal is voluntary. Nevertheless, Trump is expected to scrap the US national emissions-cutting plan and potentially also Biden-era tax credits for CO2-cutting projects.

All of this will "further jeopardise the achievement of the Paris Agreement's temperature goals," Michael Gerrard, a legal professor at Columbia Law School, said.

"That has obviously an impact on others. I mean, why should others continue to pick up the pieces if one of the key players once again leaves the room?" said Paul Watkinson, a former French climate negotiator who worked on the 2015 Paris Agreement.

Some US states have said they will continue climate action.

Regardless of politics, favourable economics drove a clean energy boom during Trump's first term – with Republican stronghold Texas leading record-high US solar and wind energy expansion in 2020, US government data show. But Trump has already taken steps to try to prevent a repeat of that, on Monday suspending offshore wind leases and revoking Biden's electric vehicle targets.

The US produces around 13% of global CO2 emissions today but is responsible for most of the CO2 released into the atmosphere since the Industrial Revolution.

As part of the Paris Agreement exit, Trump on Monday ordered an immediate cessation of all US funding pledged under UN climate talks.

That will cost poorer nations at least $11bn – the US government's record-high financial contribution delivered in 2024 to help them cope with climate change.

Together, all rich countries' governments combined contributed $116bn in climate funding for developing nations in 2022, the latest available OECD data show.

That does not include the huge climate-friendly government funding Biden rolled out domestically, whose future under Trump is uncertain.

Total US climate spending – counting domestic and international, from private and public sources – jumped to $175bn annually over 2021-2022, boosted massively by the 2022 Biden-era Inflation Reduction Act, according to non-profit research group the Climate Policy Initiative. The US is also responsible for funding around 21% of the core budget for the UN climate secretariat – the body that runs the world's climate change negotiations, which faces a funding shortfall.

The We Mean Business Coalition, which is backed by Amazon and Meta, said Trump's disruption of the US business environment could drive green investment elsewhere.

It could "open the door for other major economies to attract greater investment and talent," the non-profit group said.

Three investors told Reuters the transition to green energy, including in the US, will move forward regardless.

One impact of the Paris exit will be to prevent US businesses from selling carbon credits into a UN-backed carbon market that could be valued at more than $10bn by 2030, according to financial information provider MSCI.

While no longer able to make money from selling any surplus credits, US companies would be able to buy them on a voluntary basis. – Reuters

Shell dividend hike drives shares higher despite profit miss

By Arunima Kumar

(Reuters) -Shell reported a 16% drop in profit for 2024 on Thursday amid weakness in oil and gas prices and in demand, but shares rose after it raised its dividend by 4% and extended its share buyback programme.

The oil major also announced a $3.5 billion buyback for the current quarter, making this the 13th consecutive quarter of at least $3 billion of share repurchases.

Its shares gained over 2% even as the group reported that its

2024 adjusted earnings, its definition of net profit, fell to $23.72 billion from $28.25 billion in 2023, dented by narrower liquefied natural gas (LNG) trading margins, lower oil and gas prices, and weaker refining margins.

That fell short of a $24.64 billion consensus compiled by LSEG and $24.11 billion forecast by analysts polled by Vara Research.

Shell, the first major energy company to report results, said fourth-quarter earnings nearly halved from the previous year to $3.66 billion, also missing analysts' expectations.

"As expected, Shell reported 4Q results this morning which showed relatively soft earnings, but continued strong cash generation," RBC Capital Markets analyst Biraj Borkhataria said in a note, also highlighting the consistency with which the group has been returning cash to shareholders.

In his prepared remarks, CEO Wael Sawan said the share buybacks were "underpinned by the significant progress that we are making as an organisation."

Sawan has been focused on cutting costs and pivoting the company back to its most profitable sectors – oil, gas, and biofuels – while shifting away from renewable power.

"We achieved a (cost) reduction of $3.1 billion by the end of 2024, one year ahead of our end-2025 target date, and above the range of $2 to $3 billion that we set in 2023," he said.

Shell's fourth-quarter earnings included $2.2 billion in impairments, part of which was a $1 billion write-off for a U.S. offshore wind project.

CFO Sinead Gorman told reporters that the project did not align with company's capabilities or return goals, and Shell was looking to monetize it.

The world's leading oil and gas companies experienced a

decline in profits through 2024, following record earnings in the previous two years, as energy prices stabilised and oil demand weakened.

Shell also expects 2025 capital expenditure to fall below last year's $21 billion range, with more details to be shared at its capital markets day in March.

The group's refining operations reported an adjusted loss of $229 million in the chemicals and products unit, compared to a $29 million profit last year.

Refining margins weakened globally due to reduced economic activity and new refineries opening in Asia and Africa.

Executives said on a call with analysts that Shell had no plans to get out of refining altogether, but was not looking to expand there either.

The company is trying to sell its stake in a German refinery and intends to shut down a plant in Wesseling, Germany, following the sale of its Singapore refining and chemicals hub last year, one of the largest of its kind in the world.

In the fourth quarter, Shell ran its refineries at 76% capacity, and said it expected to increase that to 80-88% in the first quarter.

Shell also said it did not have a timeline for arbitration over LNG supply from Venture Global's Calcasieu Pass facility.

Venture Global, whose $58 billion market debut fell short of high expectations last week, began generating proceeds in 2022 with its Calcasieu Pass facility.

However, delays in commercial operations have caused contract disputes with customers, including BP, Shell and Italy's Edison, over missed cargoes.

(Reporting by Arunima Kumar in Bengaluru; editing by Savio

D’Souza, Jason Neely, Tomasz Janowski and Bernadette Baum)

Climate displacement is also a health crisis

By disrupting care services, climate displacement deprives affected communities of access to doctors, hospitals, and pharmacies.

Every year, 21.5mn people are forcibly displaced by floods, droughts, wildfires, and storms. This number is set to rise dramatically over the coming decades, with up to 1.2bn people expected to be driven from their homes by 2050. The unfolding climate crisis is not just a humanitarian disaster but also a global health emergency.

Climate displacement poses both direct and indirect threats to

public health. By disrupting care services, it deprives affected communities of access to doctors, hospitals, and pharmacies. Climate-induced migration also exacerbates poverty, overcrowding, and social instability. Food production is often severely affected, while unsanitary living conditions fuel the spread of infectious diseases.

As the climate crisis threatens to derail global efforts to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the health and well-being of hundreds of millions of people across the developing world are at risk. High-income countries are not immune: in the US, 3.2mn adults were displaced or evacuated due to natural disasters in 2022 alone.

Pharmaceutical companies must play a pivotal role in bolstering global health resilience. Their involvement is particularly critical in conflict zones at the forefront of the climate-displacement crisis, where life-saving medicines and vaccines are often in short supply.

While the pharmaceutical industry has made strides in reducing carbon dioxide emissions and adopting more sustainable practices, its efforts fall far short of mitigating climate-related disruptions to supply chains.

Some pharmaceutical companies, such as Novartis and Novo Nordisk, have launched targeted programmes to aid populations displaced by extreme weather events, while others have donated cash or supplies in response to natural disasters. The demand for these donations has risen with increasing climate and humanitarian needs. Hikma, a generic medicine manufacturer founded in Jordan, reported $4mn in donations in 2020, and $4.9mn in 2023, mostly serving the needs in the surrounding region.

No company has developed a comprehensive strategy to ensure that displaced communities have sustained access to health products. A more holistic approach is needed. Amid the ongoing climate-displacement crisis, pharmaceutical companies should adopt a four-pronged strategy to strengthen healthcare systems. For starters, they could help deliver medicines to vulnerable communities in remote areas by revamping their

supply-chains, from building redundancy into shipping networks to redesigning products to be more stable in hot climates where refrigeration may be unavailable.

Second, pharmaceutical companies must invest in research and development to create vaccines, diagnostics, and therapeutics targeting climate-sensitive diseases. Rising global temperatures are accelerating the spread of mosquito-borne illnesses such as dengue, malaria, and Zika, as well as waterborne diseases like cholera and shigella, putting displaced populations at even greater risk.

Third, pharmaceutical companies should forge long-term partnerships with humanitarian organisations focused on climate displacement. Public-private collaborations have also proven effective in strengthening health resilience. Since 2010, for example, leading vaccine manufacturers like GSK and Pfizer have supplied Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, with billions of vaccine doses, protecting vulnerable populations in some of the world’s most resource-constrained countries.

Lastly, pharmaceutical companies must boost efforts to cut greenhouse-gas emissions across their value chains. While the climate impact of pharmaceuticals may get less attention than that of traditional manufacturing industries, the sector emits more CO2 per $1mn of revenue than the automotive industry.

The active support and engagement of shareholders, employees, and other stakeholders is crucial. Investors, in particular, must encourage companies to align their business practices with global health and climate goals.

Climate displacement is not a distant or hypothetical threat; it is a rapidly escalating health emergency. The pharmaceutical industry has a moral responsibility to act. To do so effectively, companies must get ahead of the curve and provide vital, life-saving treatments to those on the front lines of the climate crisis.