Σε συνομιλίες η Κύπρος για την ΑΟΖ με τον Λίβανο. Οι επαφές που κάνει ο πρόεδρος της Κύπρου

Οι τεταμένες σχέσεις Ισραήλ-Λιβάνου και οι ραγδαίες εξελίξεις στη Μέση Ανατολή έχουν κινητοποιήσει τη Λευκωσία για επαφές υψηλού επιπέδου για την επικύρωση της ΑΟΖ με το Λίβανο. Ετσι ο πρόεδρος της Κύπρου Νίκος Χριστοδουλίδης συναντήθηκε με τον εμπειρογνώμονα περιφερειακής πολιτικής Ρούντι Μπραούντι, μακροχρόνιος υποστηρικτής του διαλόγου, της διπλωματίας και της ειρηνικής ανάπτυξης, ως προς τις ασφαλέστερες διαδρομές προς μεγαλύτερη σταθερότητα για ολόκληρη την Ευρω-Μεσογειακή περιοχή και άτυπο διαμεσολαβητή των δύο χωρών. Μάλιστα έχει γράψει και σχετικά βιβλία, όπως την «οριστικοποίηση θαλάσσιων

Συνόρων στην Ανατολική Μεσόγειο: Ποιος Θα Ειναι ο Επόμενος;» και «Ένα Κλειδί, Πολλαπλά Έπαθλα: Οριστικοποίηση Θαλάσσιων Συνόρων ανάμεσα στην Κύπρο, το Λίβανο και τη Συρία».

Ο κ. Χριστοδουλίδης και ο ομόλογός του από το Λίβανο, ο πρώην Γενικός Τζόζεφ Αουν, συμφώνησαν τον Ιούλιο να διαπραγματευτούν και να οριστικοποιήσουν μια γραμμή θαλάσσιων συνόρων . Και οι δύο χώρες αναμένουν ότι θα αποκομίσουν πολλά οφέλη από μια τέτοια συμφωνία, και η κατοχύρωση εδαφικών συνόρων στη θάλασσα θα καταστήσει ευκολότερη την προσέλκυση ξένων επενδυτών για την ανάπτυξη των ενεργειακών πηγών τους.

«Η επίτευξη συμφωνίας θα ανοίξει όλες τις πόρτες για την Κύπρο και το Λίβανο», δήλωσε ο κ. Μπαρούντι μετά από τη συνάντηση. «Οι τάσεις πηγαίνουν στη σωστή κατεύθυνση, και όχι μόνο σε σχέση με το Λίβανο. Ο πρόεδρος της Κύπρου έχει φιλόδοξα σχέδια εξωτερικής πολιτικής, ιδιαίτερα σχετικά με τις δραστηριότητες της Κύπρου τους πρώτους έξι μήνες του 2026, όταν θα έχει την προεδρία του συμβουλίου της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης».

«Εκμεταλλεύτηκα επίσης την ευκαιρία να ευχηθώ στο πρόεδρο της Κύπρου καλή επιτυχία σε αυτή την αποστολή», πρόσθεσε, «ειδικά καθώς αναμένεται να εστιάσει όχι μόνο στην ενίσχυση της συνοχής της Ευρώπης, αλλά και στην ενίσχυση του ρόλου της Κύπρου ως γέφυρα μεταξύ Ευρώπης και γειτονικών χωρών.»

Πράγματι, η Λευκωσία έχει ένα φιλόδοξο πρόγραμμα για την προεδρία της και συνεργάζεται στενά με τη Δανία, που ασκεί την προεδρία αυτό το εξάμηνο , και την Πολωνία, που θα διαδεχθεί την Κύπρο. Η λεγόμενη«τριπλή προεδρία» βοηθά στη διασφάλιση συνέχειας από τη μία προεδρία στην επόμενη.

Ο κ. Μπαρούντι έχει γράψει αρκετά βιβλία και μελέτες σχετικά με το πώς τα υπάρχοντα εργαλεία του ΟΗΕ μπορούν να βοηθήσουν τις παράκτιες χώρες να συμφωνήσουν δίκαια και ισότιμα θαλάσσια σύνορα, να μειώσουν τις εντάσεις και να αποκομίσουν σημαντικά οικονομικά και κοινωνικά οφέλη. Έχει επίσης γράψει και μιλήσει δημόσια για διάφορες ευκαιρίες περιφερειακής συνεργασίας, από

διασυνδεδεμένα ενεργειακά δίκτυα και υπεράκτια αιολικά πάρκα μέχρι κοινή διαχείριση θαλάσσιων προστατευόμενων περιοχών.

Το 2023, απονεμήθηκε στον κ. Μπαρούντι το Βραβείο Ηγεσίας από το Transatlantic Leadership Network, ένα think-tank της Ουάσινγκτον, για τη «πολύτιμη συμβολή του στην οικοδόμηση μιας ειρηνικής και ευημερούσας Ανατολικής Μεσογείου».

Σε δεκάδες άρθρα, μελέτες, εμφανίσεις στα μέσα ενημέρωσης και ομιλίες, για παράδειγμα, ο βετεράνος της κλάδου έχει τεκμηριώσει την επιχειρηματική βάση για το νησιωτικό κράτος να γίνει κέντρο επεξεργασίας και διανομής φυσικού αερίου για τους γείτονές του. Αυτό θα περιελάμβανε την Κύπρο να δημιουργήσει έναν υπόθαλάσσιο αγωγό φυσικού αερίου προς την ευρωπαϊκή ενδοχώρα, ένα εργοστάσιο υγροποιημένου φυσικού αερίου (LNG) που θα ήταν το μεγαλύτερο έργο που έχει ποτέ η χώρα, ή και υπεράκτια πλωτά συστήματα αποθήκευσης και υγροποίησης για την εξυπηρέτηση απομακρυσμένων χωρών δια θαλάσσης.

«Όλες αυτές οι μελέτες και οι παράγοντες που ανέδειξαν παραμένουν επίκαιροι σήμερα», δήλωσε ο κ. Μπαρούντι. «Η Κύπρος διαθέτει την εγγύτητα, τις τιμές γης και τις σχέσεις με τους γείτονές της για να γίνει ο συνεταιριστής όλων στις εξαγωγές ενέργειας, αλλά και να λειτουργήσει ως θεμέλιος λίθος για μια πιο σταθερή και ευημερούσα περιοχή.»

Amid Maritime Boundary Talks in the Region, Cypriot President Receives

International Energy Expert, Roudi Baroudi, on UN Demarcation Tools

NICOSIA – 29, September 2025: Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides met today with the international energy policy expert, Roudi Baroudi, who presented copies of his two latest books, “Settling Maritime Boundaries in the Eastern Mediterranean: Who Will Be Next?” and “One Key, Multiple Prizes: Settling Maritime Boundaries Among Cyprus, Lebanon, and Syria”.

Baroudi, a long-time advocate of dialogue, diplomacy, and peaceful development as the surest routes to greater stability for the entire Euro-Med region, said he felt “honored to have been received by the President.”

Christodoulides and his Lebanese counterpart, former General Joseph Aoun, agreed in July to have their respective teams negotiate and finalize a maritime boundary line (MBL). Both countries expect to derive numerous benefits from such a pact, and having treatied borders at sea will make it easier to attract the foreign investors required to develop their respective offshore oil and gas resources.

Reaching a deal "will open up all sorts of doors for Cyprus and Lebanon," Baroudi said after the meeting. "The trends are going in the right direction, and not just vis-à-vis Lebanon. The President has ambitious foreign-policy plans, particularly with regard to Cyprus' activities for the first six months of 2026, when it will hold the rotating presidency of the European Union."

"I also took the opportunity to wish His Excellency every good fortune on that mission," he added, "especially since it is expected to focus not only on shoring up Europe's cohesion, but also on beefing up Cyprus' role as a bridge between Europe and its neighbors."

Indeed, Nicosia does have an ambitious agenda for its time in the presidency, and is working closely with Denmark, the current holder, and Poland, which will follow Cyprus' term. The so-called "trio presidency" helps to ensure continuity from one presidency to the next.

Baroudi has published several books and studies on how existing United Nations tools can help coastal states to agree fair and equitable maritime boundaries, reduce tensions, and reap significant economic and social rewards in the bargain. He also has written and spoken publicly about a variety of opportunities for regional cooperation, from interconnected power grids and offshore wind farms to joint management of marine protected areas. In 2023, he was awarded the Transatlantic Leadership Award by the Transatlantic Leadership Network, a Washington think-tank, for what it described as

“his valuable contribution in building a peaceful and prosperous Eastern Mediterranean.”

In addition to these works, ever since 2011, when the full potential of the East Med’s offshore hydrocarbon deposits began to emerge, Baroudi’s advocacy role has seen him provide thought leadership for a variety of projects and proposals that would transform Cyprus into a regional energy hub. In dozens of articles, studies, media appearances, and speaking engagements, for example, the industry veteran has made the business case for the island nation to become a gas processing and distribution center for its neighbors. This would include Cyprus hosting one end of an undersea gas pipeline to the European mainland, a liquified natural gas (LNG) plant that would be the country’s largest-ever project, and/or offshore floating storage and gasification units(s) to serve more distant customers by ship.

“All of these studies and the factors they highlighted are still relevant today,” Baroudi said. “Cyprus has the proximity, the land prices, and the relationships with its neighbors to make it everyone’s partner for energy exports, but also to serve as the bedrock for a stabler and more prosperous region.”

Brazil’s Climate Push Must Start at Home

As the current G20 president and host of next year’s United Nations Climate Change Conference, Brazil has sought to establish itself as a global climate leader. But to have the biggest impact, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva’s government must lead by example, which means committing to ambitious emissions targets and energy policies.

AMSTERDAM – Ever since Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva returned to office in 2023 and told the world that Brazil is “back on the world stage,” the government has endeavored to establish itself as a global climate leader. As the current G20 president, Brazil is pushing for a sustainable bioeconomy and scaled-up climate finance – goals that it will surely continue to pursue as the host of next year’s United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP30). Moreover, the country recently formed a troika with the hosts of COP28 (the United Arab Emirates) and COP29 (Azerbaijan) to preserve the Paris climate agreement’s goal of limiting global warming to 1.5º Celsius.

The Brazilian government has not been afraid to challenge rich countries and individuals as part of its efforts to halt the rise in global temperatures. But to have the biggest impact, Brazil must lead by example. As the saying goes, charity begins at home. The timing could not be better:

countries must submit more ambitious 2035 emissions-reduction targets, known as nationally determined contributions (NDCs), by February 2025.

The need to cut greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions has never been more urgent for Brazil, which was recently hit by record flooding and has been fighting devastating forest fires for weeks. To be sure, investing in adaptation and resilience requires increased financial flows from the wealthy countries responsible for the bulk of historic pollution to vulnerable countries suffering the worst effects of global warming. But reducing fossil-fuel emissions and extraction, which has harmed traditional and indigenous communities' health, destroyed their land, and diminished their capacity to provide for their families, is also a matter of economic and social development. Brazil must devise an energy policy that works for these communities.

The share of electricity generated from wind and solar power is expanding rapidly, and these renewable-energy sources are becoming cheaper by the day. Brazil has abundant sun and wind and the tools to operate these technologies successfully. But, equally important, local communities are already expanding clean-energy infrastructure and have created innovative and effective solutions to participate in the decarbonization decision-making process.

Various community-led and decentralized clean-energy projects, often developed in partnership with NGOs, are being launched across Brazil, from isolated villages in the Amazon to densely populated *favelas* (informal settlements) in Rio de Janeiro. At the same time, the country's indigenous peoples have developed robust consultation protocols for the design and implementation of public and private renewable-energy projects on their land.

Last year, COP28 closed with an agreement to "transition away from fossil fuels" – the first time such a call has been made

at the climate summit – and to triple renewable energy and double energy efficiency by 2030. To honor that agreement, Lula's government must challenge the false notion that fossil fuels are necessary for development and can complement efforts to scale up and provide equitable access to community-centered renewable energy.

To show the world that Brazil can lead the global renewable-energy transition by example, its updated NDC must commit to bold action, such as stopping new fossil-fuel projects and shutting down existing ones, and deploying the resources required to meet the global goal of tripling renewable-energy generation. Moreover, to advance the goal of energy justice, the government should implement policies aimed at ensuring that solar and wind power reaches vulnerable communities.

If the Brazilian government creates a national platform that provides operational support to these clean-energy solutions, the country can show the world that it is possible to decarbonize while putting people first. In fact, this is not only possible but essential.

A few years ago, the world came together to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Governments quickly poured resources into vaccine development and production, successfully creating the tools to solve a novel problem in record time. In this case, the world has everything it needs to accelerate the energy transition and limit global warming; all that it is missing is the political will to commit to – and follow through on – ambitious targets and policies. Brazil can and should be one of the first countries to demonstrate it.

Sweden Sets Up $23 Billion Emergency Backstop for Utilities

Niclas Rolander

Want the lowdown on European markets? In your inbox before the open, every day.

Sweden's government will provide Nordic and Baltic utilities as much as 250 billion kronor ($23.2 billion) in credit guarantees as it seeks to prevent Russia's energy curbs from setting off a financial crisis.

The measure is aimed at helping companies struggling to meet the surging collateral requirements needed to trade electricity, and avoid the threat of some going into technical defaults as soon as Monday, Finance Minister Mikael Damberg said at a news conference in Stockholm. Utilities registered

with Nasdaq Clearing AB are eligible for the guarantees.

“The issue is currently isolated to energy producers, but unless we act, it could have contagion effects on the rest of the financial market,” the minister said on Sunday. “Ultimately, it could lead to a financial crisis.”

The surging price of energy in Europe has made it more expensive for utilities to buy and sell electricity, because of the collateral required to guarantee trades on power markets facing unprecedented turbulence. Fortum Oyj of neighboring Finland said Aug. 29 its collateral rose by 1 billion euros ($1 billion) in a week to 5 billion euros, excluding funds posted by its German subsidiary Uniper SE.

Germany agrees $65bn inflation relief package

AFP / Berlin

The German government yesterday unveiled a new multi-billion euro plan to help housesholds cope with soaring prices, and said it was eyeing windfall profits from energy companies to help fund the relief.

German businesses and consumers are feeling the pain from sky-high energy prices, as Europe's biggest economy seeks to extricate itself from reliance from Russian supplies in the wake of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

Rapid measures to prepare for the coming cold season will ensure that Germany would "get through this winter," Chancellor Olaf Scholz said at the unveiling of the €65bn ($65bn) package.

The latest agreement, which brings total relief to almost €100bn since the start of the Ukraine war, was hammered out overnight into Sunday by Germany's three-way ruling coalition of Scholz's Social Democrats, the Greens, and the liberal FDP.

Among the headline measures are one-off payments to millions of vulnerable pensioners and a plan to skim off energy firms' windfall profits. The government's latest relief package came two days after Russian energy giant Gazprom said it would not restart gas deliveries via the Nord Stream 1 pipeline on Saturday as planned after a three-day maintenance.

The government had made "timely decisions" to avoid a winter crisis, Scholz said, including filling gas stores and restarting coal power plants. But preventative measures, including a drive to reduce consumption, have done little to break a sharp increase in household bills.

The latest announcement follows two previous relief packages totalling €30bn, which included a reduction in the tax on petrol and a popular heavily subsidised public transport ticket.

But with the expiration of many of those measures at the end of August and consumer prices soaring, the government has been under pressure to provide new support. Inflation rose again to 7.9% in August, after falling for two straight months thanks to previous government relief measures.

The take-off in energy prices is expected to push inflation in

Germany to around 10% by the end of the year, its highest rate in decades. Scholz said however that not everyone is suffering from the high consumer prices.

Some energy companies which may not be using gas to generate electricity were “simply using the fact that the high price of gas determines the price of electricity and are therefore making a lot of money,” he said.

“We have therefore resolved to change the market organisation in such a way that these random profits no longer occur or that they are skimmed off.” The trimming of windfall profits would create “financial headroom that should be used specifically to relieve the burden for consumers in Europe,” the government said in its policy paper.

The move could potentially bring “double-digit billions” of euros in relief, finance minister Christian Lindner estimated in the press conference. The government said it would push for the move to be implemented across the European Union, before going ahead with the measure on its own.

Brussels on Monday said it would prepare “emergency” action to reform the electricity market and bring prices under control. Scholz said he expected the EU to “deal quickly” with the issue, adding that it was “very clear that we need rapid changes in this area”.

Repeating his mantra that Germans will “never walk alone” through the energy crisis, the chancellor unveiled a raft of measures, including a one-off payment of €300 to millions of pensioners to help them cover rising power bills.

The government will also target students with a smaller one-time transfer of €200, and an heating cost payment for people receiving housing benefits.

Berlin also set aside €1.5bn for work on a successor to the wildly popular nine-euro monthly ticket on local and regional transport networks. The relief package as a whole should be financed without planning to take on further debt, Lindner said.

“These measures are included within the government’s existing budget plans,” covering 2022 and 2023, he said, with the

remainder covered by the windfall energy profit measures.

France faces uncertain winter as nuke power shortage looms

By Forrest Crellin, Silvia Aloisi And Nina Chestney/Paris

France, once Europe’s top power exporter, may not produce enough nuclear energy this winter to help European neighbours seeking alternatives to Russian gas, and may even have to ration electricity to meet its own needs.

France has for years helped to underpin Europe’s electricity supply, providing about 15% of the region’s total power generation.

But this year, for the first time since French records began in 2012, France has become a net power importer as its own production of nuclear energy hit a 30-year low, based on data from consultancy EnAppSys.

The supply squeeze, caused by a wave of repairs at the

country’s nuclear power stations, couldn’t have come at a worse time. Europe is in the grip of an energy crisis as Russian gas supplies plummet in the wake of the Ukraine conflict and France, which derives 70% of its electricity from nuclear energy, has lost its edge.

French power prices have hit a string of all-time highs – topping 1,000 euros ($1,004.10) per megawatt hour earlier this month – on expectations the country will not have enough electricity to meet domestic demand. That surge, from prices of around €70 a year ago, has added to a cost-of-living crisis.

“Sky-high electricity prices are an economic threat, with France’s nuclear issues seemingly turning into a greater challenge than Russian gas flows,” said Norbert Rücker, head of economics and next generation research at Julius Baer.

A record number of France’s 56 nuclear reactors have gone offline for overdue maintenance and checks related to corrosion issues that first surfaced last December. Some reactors have had to cut production during the summer to prevent rivers used to cool reactors from overheating.

As of August 29, 57% of nuclear generation capacity was offline, based on data provided by state-controlled nuclear power group Electricite de France, or EDF.

EDF’s current outage schedule sees production levels returning to around 50 gigawatts (GW) daily by December from around 27 GW now as reactors gradually come back for the winter season.

But the market, analysts and union officials think that forecast is too optimistic.

In a normal year, France produces around 400 terawatt-hours (or 400,000 GWh) of nuclear electricity and exports about 10% of it in warmer months. But during winter consumption peaks, France imports power from its neighbours, particularly Germany.

This year, EDF forecasts French nuclear production at 280-300 terawatt-hours, the lowest since 1993. France has imported power from the likes of Germany and Belgium during the summer, when it would usually be exporting it.

“That makes for scary winter prospects,” said Paris-based nuclear energy consultant Mycle Schneider.

Six analysts polled by Reuters estimated that France’s power capacity during the winter will fall below EDF’s forecasts, by 10 to 15GW a day until at least late January. This means France will need to import more power when the rest of Europe will also be facing an energy crunch, or risk blackouts.

Last week, EDF – which this year has cut its nuclear output forecasts several times and issued four profit warnings – delayed the restart of several reactors to at least mid-November, fuelling more uncertainty.

Current power market prices reveal a lack of confidence in EDF’s ability to put all its reactors back online in time for the cold season, a parliamentary source close to government said, although this source also said the availability of the fleet should improve from current low levels.

“We should be able to recover a large part of the reactors which are currently offline,” the source said. “We can also ask the French to make efforts, especially to reduce consumption peaks.”

The measures the French government could take include forced interruption of power supply to industrial and commercial consumers, reduced heating in public buildings, turning off street lights and controlled power cuts, he said.

French Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne has urged companies to draft energy savings plans by next month, warning they would be hit first if France has to ration gas and electricity.

The CGT union, France’s biggest, is bracing for some rolling blackouts this winter.

“The situation is really worrying… to say that there won’t be power cuts is a very optimistic gamble, unless one already knows for sure that the winter will be warm,” said Virginie Neumayer, who follows nuclear issues at CGT.

Even if EDF can boost nuclear production, analysts say France will still not have spare power to sell to neighbours starved of Russian gas, with Italy, Britain and Switzerland seen as the countries worst hit.

“We have seen some effects over the last months already, as Spain, the UK and Italy all have had to increase their domestic production, since export volumes from France have been much lower than normal,” said Fabian Ronningen of consultancy Rystad Energy.

“I think Italy would be the most affected country (if France stopped exporting electricity), as they are Europe’s overall largest power importer.”

EDF CEO Jean-Bernard Levy said on Monday that among the reactors that are closed, 12 were for corrosion problems and the rest were either shut for routine maintenance delayed by the pandemic or taken off-line to prepare them for winter.

Levy said the company was “totally mobilised” to avoid more outages.

“These works are heavy, we will need hundreds and hundreds of very skilled people, we are making them come from abroad, the US in particular,” he told a business conference. He said corrosion issues required workers to operate in a part of the reactor where radiation is high, meaning exposure had to be limited.

For the coming winter, meteorologists often look at how the La Niña weather pattern develops over the summer as an indicator of a colder than average winter.

Currently, the odds of that happening are at 60% during December-February 2022-23, US government weather forecaster the National Weather Service’s Climate Prediction Center said.

Longer term, questions remain over whether EDF, which is in the process of being fully nationalised, can maintain its ageing fleet of existing power stations – mostly build in the 1980s – or build new ones quickly enough to replace them.

France’s nuclear safety watchdog ASN said in May that fixing the corrosion issues affecting EDF’s reactors could take years.

The next generation nuclear reactors EDF has built – including one in Flamanville in France, and another at Hinkley Point in England – have run billions over budget and several years beyond schedule. – Reuters

بارودي: الجهود الأميركية بدأت تتسم بالإيجابية ما سيمكّن لبنان خلال شهر من بدء التنقيب عن النفط والغاز

، "الجهود" رودي بارودي" ثمّن الخبير الدّولي في مجال الطّاقة، الخارجية" ولا سيّما "الولايات المتحدة الأميركية" الّتي تقوم بها ، عبر الوسيط آموس هوكستين، من أجل تسوية النّزاع" الأميركية "، لافتًا إلى أنّ "هذه" إسرائيل" و"لبنان" الحدودي البحري بين الجهود بدأت تتّسم بالإيجابيّة، ما سيمكّن لبنان في خلال شهر على النفط" عن "التنقيب" أبعد تقدير من الدّخول فعليًّا في عمليّة ، ولا سيّما في البلوكات الجنوبيّة، وتحديدًا البلوك رقم 9" والغاز قانا" حيث حقل".

وأشار، في تصريح، إلى أنّ "الطّرح الإسرائيلي للمرور بالبلوك اللّبناني رقم 8، هو مجرّد مناورة ذكيّة لهدف آخر، ذلك أنّ اتفاقيّة الغاز بين إسرائيل وقبرص واليونان، الّتي تمتدّ إلى

إيطاليا وكانت قد وُقّعت في 3 كانون الثّاني من العام 2020، لن ترى النّور، باعتبار أنّ لا جدوى اقتصاديّة منها، لأنّه مهما كانت كميّة الغاز المنتَجة حاليّاً، فلن تكون مبرّرًا لإنفاق من 12 إلى 14 مليار يورو، لبناء خطّ أنابيب بقطر 48 إنشًا لمسافة 1125 ميلاً".

وجدّد بارودي الإشادة بـ"إيجابيّة المفاوضات الجارية حاليّاً، وبالجهود المبذولة لحماية حقوق لبنان على الصّعيد الدّولي"، مركّزًا على أنّ "أكثر الأخبار إيجابيّةً، هي أنّ أركان الدولة اللبنانية متّفقون على التوجّه ذاته". وأعرب عن تفاؤله بأنّ "الاتّفاق سيصل إلى خواتيم مشجّعة ترضي جميع الجهات"".

How Europe Became So Dependent on Putin for Its Gas

Russian gas is attractive to Europe because it's usually cheap, easy to transport and almost always available. Some European Union countries depend on it because they are shutting coal plants, and Germany is even planning for the end of nuclear power. Russia's dominance has been enhanced by the depletion of North Sea fields controlled by the U.K. and the Netherlands. Gazprom PJSC supplies about a third of all gas consumed in Europe and, before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, was on track to become even more important as the continent shrinks its own production. In March, however, Russia threatened to cut supplies, and the European Union began mapping out a path to reduce its dependence.

1. How did Russia become so significant?

With its vast Siberian fields, Russia has the world's largest

reserves of natural gas. It began exporting to Poland in the 1940s and laid pipelines in the 1960s to deliver fuel to and through satellite states of what was then the Soviet Union. Even at the height of the Cold War, deliveries were steady. But since the Soviet Union broke up, Russia and Ukraine have quarreled over pipelines through Ukrainian territory, prompting Russian authorities to find other routes.

2. How vulnerable is Europe?

A supply crunch in late 2021 provided a vivid insight into Europe's reliance on gas flows from Russia. Storage tanks in the EU fell to their lowest seasonal level in more than a decade after longer-than-usual maintenance at Norwegian fields and Russia rebuilding its own inventories. Benchmark gas prices more than tripled. The EU vowed a decade ago to reduce its dependence on Russian energy, and continuing purchases by member nations have been a contentious issue within the economic bloc and caused rifts with the U.S.

3. What role does Ukraine play?

About a third of Russian gas flowing to Europe passes through Ukraine. Even as the crisis in the region escalated into war, analysts said Russia, with a history of supply disruptions over price disputes, probably would strive to be seen as a reliable supplier. Gazprom's shipments to Europe and Turkey were about 177 billion cubic meters in 2021, according to calculations by Bloomberg News and BCS Global Markets based on the company's data. When Ukraine and Russia reached a five-year gas transit deal in December 2019, assuring supplies until 2024, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said the nation would earn at least $7 billion from transit fees.

4. How has Russia disrupted the market before?

In 2006 and 2009, disputes with Ukraine over pricing and siphoning of gas led to cutoffs of Russian supplies transiting through the country. The second shutdown lasted almost two

weeks in the dead of winter. Slovakia and some Balkan countries had to ration gas, shut factories and cut power supplies. Since then, the most vulnerable countries have raced to lay pipelines, connect grids and build terminals to import liquefied natural gas, a supercooled form of the fuel that can be shipped from as far as Qatar and the U.S.

5. What supply networks are there?

Outside supplies, mostly from Russia, Norway and Algeria, account for about 80% of the gas the EU consumes. Some of the biggest economies are among the most exposed, with Germany importing 90% of its needs — much of it via a pipeline under the Baltic Sea called Nord Stream, which has been fully operational since 2012. (This was the supply line Russia on March 7 suggested could be cut as part of its response to sanctions imposed over the invasion of Ukraine.) Belgium, Spain and Portugal face the problem of low storage capacity, as does the U.K., which no longer is part of the bloc and closed its only big gas storage site. The continent has a mass of pipelines, including Yamal-Europe, which runs from Russia through Belarus and Poland before reaching Germany, and TAG, which takes Russian gas to Austria and Italy. Many cross several borders, creating plenty of possible choke points.

6. What about the Nord Stream 2 pipeline?

It was against this background that Nord Stream 2, a new Russian pipeline alongside the first, was completed in late 2021. But it has become entangled in politics and a lengthy regulatory process. There was strong opposition from the U.S., which imposed sanctions that delayed construction. Following the eruption of the war in Ukraine, Germany suspended its certification process for Nord Stream 2, and the EU's executive arm readied a revised energy strategy for the bloc to "substantially reduce our dependency on Russian gas this year."

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Russia cuts gas flows further as Europe makes savings plea

Reuters/Berlin/Frankfurt

Russia delivered less gas to Europe yesterday in a further escalation of an energy stand-off between Moscow and the European Union that will make it harder, and costlier, for the bloc to fill up storage ahead of the winter heating season.
The cut in supplies, flagged by Gazprom earlier this week, has reduced the capacity of Nord Stream 1 pipeline – the major delivery route to Europe for Russian gas – to a mere fifth of its total capacity.
Nord Stream 1 accounts for around a third of all Russian gas exports to Europe.

On Tuesday, EU countries approved a weakened emergency plan to curb gas demand after striking compromise deals to limit cuts for some countries, hoping lower consumption will ease the impact in case Moscow stops supplies altogether.

The plan highlights fears that countries will be unable to meet goals to refill storage and keep their citizens warm during the winter months and that Europe's fragile economic growth may take another hit if gas will have to be rationed.

Royal Bank of Canada analysts said the plan could help Europe get through the winter provided gas flows from Russia are at 20-50% capacity, but warned against "complacency in the market European politicians have now solved the issue of Russian gas dependence."

While Moscow has blamed various technical problems for the supply cuts, Brussels has accused Russia of using energy as a weapon to blackmail the bloc and retaliate for Western sanctions over its invasion of Ukraine.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Gazprom was supplying as much gas to Europe as possible, adding that sanctions-driven technical issues with equipment were preventing it from exporting more.

Yesterday, physical flows via Nord Stream 1 tumbled to 14.4mn kilowatt hours per hour (kWh/h) between 1000-1100 GMT from around 28mn kWh/h a day earlier, already just 40% of normal capacity.

The drop comes less than a week after the pipeline restarted following a scheduled 10-day maintenance period.

European politicians have repeatedly warned Russia could stop gas flows completely this winter, which would thrust Germany into recession and send prices for consumers and industry soaring even further.

The Dutch wholesale gas price for August, the European benchmark, jumped 9% to 205 euros per megawatt hour yesterday, up around 412% from a year ago.

German finance minister Christian Lindner said he was open to the use of nuclear power to avoid an electricity shortage.

Germany has said it could extend the life of its three

remaining nuclear power plants, accounting for 6% of the country’s overall power mix, in the face of a possible cut-off of Russian gas.

Klaus Mueller, head of Germany’s network regulator, said the country could still avoid a gas shortage that would prompt its rationing. Germany, Europe’s top economy and its largest importer of Russian gas, has been particularly hit by supply cuts since mid-June, with its gas importer Uniper requiring a 15bn euro ($15.21bn) state bailout as a result. Uniper and Italy’s Eni both said they received less gas from Gazprom than in recent days.

Mueller issued another plea to households and industry to save gas and avoid rationing.

“The crucial thing is to save gas,” Mueller said. “I would like to hear less complaints but reports (from industries saying) we as a sector are contributing to this,” he told broadcaster Deutschlandfunk.

German industry groups, however, warned companies may have no choice but cut production to achieve bigger savings, pointing to slow approval for replacing natural gas with other, more polluting fuels.

Mercedes-Benz chief executive Ola Kaellenius said a mixture of efficiency measures, increased electricity consumption, lowering temperatures in production facilities and switching to oil could lower gas use by up to 50% within the year, if necessary.

Germany is currently at Phase 2 of a three-stage emergency gas plan, with the final phase to kick in once rationing can no longer be avoided.

No net zero without nature

By Nigel Topping And Mahmoud Mohieldin/ London

Businesses, investors, and governments that are serious about fulfilling net-zero emissions pledges before 2050 should be rushing to protect, conserve, and regenerate the natural resources and ecosystems that support our economic growth, food security, health, and climate. Yet there appear to be worryingly few trailblazers out there.

Worse, we are quickly running out of time. The science makes clear that to avoid the most catastrophic effects of climate change and to build resilience against the effects that are already inevitable, we must end biodiversity loss before 2030. That means establishing lasting conservation for at least 30% of land and sea areas within eight years, and then charting a course toward living in harmony with nature by 2050.

Though the challenge is massive, ignoring it makes no sense from a business perspective. A World Economic Forum white paper estimates that nature-positive policies “could generate an estimated $10tn in new annual business value and create 395mn jobs by 2030.” Among other things, such policies would use precision-agriculture technologies to improve crop yields

– diversifying diets with more fruit and vegetables in the process – and boost agroforestry and peatland restoration.

A nature-positive approach can also be more cost-effective. For example, the Dasgupta Review (the Final Report of the United Kingdom's Independent Review on the Economics of Biodiversity) finds that green infrastructure like salt marshes and mangroves are 2-5 times cheaper than grey infrastructure such as breakwaters.

Nonetheless, private-sector action is lagging, including in economic sectors where the health of value chains is closely tied to that of nature. That is one key finding from an analysis just released by the UN Climate Change High-Level Champions, Global Canopy, Rainforest Alliance, and others.

Out of 148 major companies assessed, only nine – or 6% – are making strong progress to end deforestation. Among them are the Brazilian paper and pulp producer Suzano and five of the largest consumer goods companies: Nestlé, PepsiCo, Unilever, Mars, and Colgate-Palmolive.

Unilever, for example, is committed to a deforestation-free supply chain by 2023, and thus is focusing on palm oil, paper and board, tea, soy, and cocoa, as these contribute to more than 65% of its impact on land. Nestlé has now made over 97% of its primary meat, palm oil, pulp and paper, soy, and sugar supply chains deforestation-free. And PepsiCo aims to implement regenerative farming across the equivalent of its agricultural footprint by 2030, and to end deforestation and development on peat.

These are positive steps, but they represent exceptions, rather than any new normal. Moreover, the financial sector has also been slow to turn nature-positive. Since the COP26 climate-change conference in Glasgow last year, only 35 financial firms have committed to tackle agricultural commodity-driven deforestation by 2025. The hope now is that more firms will join the deforestation commitment by COP27 this November. Under the umbrella of the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero, 500 financial firms (representing $135tn in assets) have committed to halving their portfolios'

emissions by 2030 and reaching net zero by 2050. And now, the Alliance has issued new net-zero guidance that includes recommended policies for addressing deforestation.

Nature functions as a kind of global capital, and protecting it should be a no-brainer for businesses, investors, and governments. The World Economic Forum finds that "$44tn of economic value generation — over half the world's total GDP — is moderately or highly dependent on nature and its services." But this profound source of value is increasingly at risk, as demonstrated by the current food crisis, which is driven not just by the war in Ukraine but also by climate-related disasters such as drought and India's extreme heatwave, locust swarms in East Africa, and floods in China.

Businesses increasingly have the tools to start addressing these kinds of problems. Recently, the Science Based Targets initiative released a methodology for targeting emissions related to food, land, and agriculture. Capital for Climate's Nature-Based Solutions Investment platform helps financiers identify opportunities to invest in nature with competitive returns. And the Business for Nature coalition is exploring additional moves the private sector can make.

Governments have also taken steps in the right direction. At COP26, countries accounting for over 90% of the world's forests endorsed a leaders' declaration to halt forest loss and land degradation by 2030. And a dozen countries pledged to provide $12bn in public finance for forests by 2025, and to do more to leverage private finance for the same purpose. They can now start meeting those commitments ahead of COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh, by enacting the necessary policies, establishing the right incentives, and delivering on their financial promises.

Meanwhile, the UN-backed Race to Zero and Race to Resilience campaigns will continue working in parallel, helping businesses, investors, cities, and regions put conservation of nature at the heart of their work to decarbonise and build resilience. The five strong corporate performers on deforestation are in the Race to Zero, and the campaign's

recently strengthened criteria will pressure other members to do more to use biodiversity sustainably and align their activities and financing with climate-resilient development. The world is watching to see if the latest promises of climate action are robust and credible. By investing in nature now, governments and companies can show that they are offering more than words. — Project Syndicate

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