

Egyptian minister discusses clean energy plans with EU bank VP

Thu, 2022-03-03 17:37

CAIRO: Tarek El-Molla, the Egyptian minister of petroleum and mineral resources, has met with Mark Bowman, the vice president of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, to enhance cooperation in reducing carbon emissions and promoting clean energy.

The two sides also covered global oil and natural gas prices – which are significantly rising due to several political crises – and reviewed the ongoing preparations for Egypt’s hosting of the COP27 World Climate Summit.

El-Molla stressed that Egypt is committed to international agreements for preserving the environment and reducing emissions, foremost of which is the Paris Climate Agreement, adding that Cairo has adopted an ambitious strategy that supports the transition to cleaner energy use by reducing carbon emissions as part of its “Egypt 2030” vision for sustainable development.

The minister said that Egypt is developing an ambitious plan to use hydrogen as a low-hydrocarbon fuel source, focusing on producing blue hydrogen in the short- and medium-term as well as the production of green hydrogen.

He noted the importance of natural gas as a transitional fuel, as it has the fewest fossil fuel emissions, adding that several countries have adopted it as they move towards cleaner energy.

El-Molla said that modern, advanced technologies have provided a great opportunity to not only reduce carbon emissions but to also capture, store and exploit them, which was not possible until a few years ago.

The minister said that the petroleum sector is working on several projects to reduce emissions, foremost of which is the plan to produce wooden panels from rice straw.

He also referred to the pilot project being implemented in partnership with Italian company Eni in the Meleiha fields of Agiba in the Western Desert to capture and store carbon with new technologies.

He added: “This is besides the projects to benefit from flare gasses instead of burning them in oil fields, which contributes to reducing carbon dioxide emissions by more than 800,000 tonnes.”

During the meeting, the two sides agreed to form a joint working group to identify clean energy projects and reduce emissions. It will prepare for an initiative following studies on the low-carbon opportunities that will be launched during the COP27 climate summit hosted by Egypt this year.

Bowman affirmed the European Bank’s appreciation of the relationship with Egypt and its aspiration to expand cooperation with Cairo.

He noted the bank's full readiness to support Egypt's efforts to preserve the environment and participate strongly in the upcoming World Climate Summit.

Bowman also praised Egypt's important role in the region and the world and its transformation – in cooperation with neighboring countries – into a key regional hub for trade and the circulation of gas and oil, and a gateway to Africa in the energy sector.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Egypt](#)

[European Bank for Reconstruction and Development \(EBRD\)](#)

[Tarek El-Molla](#)

[Mark Bowman](#)

[carbon emissions](#)

[clean energy](#)

Egypt received \$5.5bn from EBRD during 2017-2022 EBRD approves \$282m loan for Egypt's metro project

[US returns billionaire's plundered artifacts to Jordan](#)

Author:

Wed, 2022-03-02 23:40

JERUSALEM: American authorities have returned nine looted artifacts to Jordan that were seized from a US billionaire collector as part of a landmark deal announced in December.

The artifacts were among 180 items seized by the Manhattan District Attorney's office as part of an agreement with collector Michael Steinhardt to surrender trafficked artifacts and avoid prosecution. The deal capped a four-year investigation into Steinhardt's possession of looted antiquities.

The Jordanian Antiquities Ministry and the US Embassy in Jordan held a ceremony in Jordan's capital, Amman, on Tuesday showcasing the objects that were "illegally smuggled from Jordan and obtained by an antiquities collector in the United States," the embassy said in a statement.

"This is a testament to the United States' commitment to help protect Jordan's cultural heritage. With today's repatriation of Jordanian antiquities, we are keeping this promise," Ambassador Henry T. Wooster said.

The American and Jordanian authorities' press statements did not mention Steinhardt by name, but seven of the artifacts that appeared in photos published by the ministry matched the description of Jordanian items in court documents.

Two ancient Jewish tombstones that were plundered from Jordan and bought by Steinhardt from an Israeli antiquities dealer did not appear in photos from the press conference. The director of the Jordanian Antiquities Ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

Since the Manhattan District Attorney's office announced the agreement in December, US authorities have returned Steinhardt's plundered artifacts to Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Libya, Iraq, and now Jordan. Steinhardt was not accused of plundering any items himself and has said he did not commit any crime. But the DA's office said he "knew, or should have ascertained by reasonable inquiry" that the antiquities were stolen.

More than two dozen artifacts that had been plundered from Israel and the occupied West Bank are expected to be returned to Israeli authorities later this month, the Israeli Antiquities Authority said.

Of the 40 artifacts being repatriated to Israel as part of the deal, at least 22 are believed to have been plundered from West Bank sites, according to court documents. Steinhardt "has been unable to locate" nine of those pieces, and another three are on display at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

The museum recently removed Steinhardt's name from the display label for two Neolithic masks he had loaned.

The DA's office said the artifacts from the occupied West Bank will be returned to the Israeli government "pursuant to the Oslo Accords," the 1995 interim agreement between Israel and the Palestinians, which says the return of West Bank artifacts to the Palestinians should be resolved in a still-elusive final peace deal.

Jihad Yassin, a Palestinian Tourism and Antiquities Ministry official, said that the materials that came from the West Bank should be returned to the Palestinians, and that his department was preparing to submit a report to UNESCO about the issue.

Steinhardt, 81, is a hedge fund founder and philanthropist who chairs the Steinhardt Foundation for Jewish Life. He is also co-founder of Birthright Israel, an organization that sends young Jews on free trips to Israel and a prominent patron of the Israel Museum and other institutions in the country.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Jordan](#)

[artifacts](#)

Egypt to probe alleged Pharaonic artifacts in Afghanistan

[Iran deal 'cannot be postponed any longer': German chancellor](#)

Author:

Wed, 2022-03-02 23:34

JERUSALEM/VIENNA: Germany's Olaf Scholz said on Wednesday that a new Iran nuclear agreement "cannot be postponed any longer," during his first visit as chancellor to Israel, which staunchly opposes efforts to forge a deal with Tehran.

Policy differences on Iran surfaced at a Jerusalem joint press conference, with Scholz saying Germany "would like to see an agreement reached in

Vienna.”

The latest round of negotiations to salvage Iran’s 2015 nuclear deal started in late November in the Austrian capital and the talks are expected to reach a crunch point in the coming days.

The so-called Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action secured sanctions relief for Iran in return for strict curbs on its nuclear program to prevent it acquiring an atomic weapon, a goal Iran has always denied pursuing.

“Now is the time to make a decision,” Scholz said. “This must not be postponed any longer and cannot be postponed any longer. Now is the time to finally say yes to something that represents a good and reasonable solution.”

Israel’s Premier Naftali Bennett has said he is “deeply troubled” by the outlines of a new deal taking shape, fearing it does too little to stop Iran from getting the nuclear bomb, while granting it sanctions relief.

Bennett stressed on Wednesday that Israel is “following the talks in Vienna with concern” and warned that “Israel will know how to defend itself and ensure its security and future.”

“Bitter experience” with broken US promises has made it inevitable that Iran will push to defend its interests by securing a reliable nuclear deal, its top security official said on Wednesday, according to the Nour news website.

“Bitter experience with the US breach of promises and European inaction have made it inevitable to meet the requirements for a reliable, balanced and sustainable agreement,” Ali Shamkhani, head of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, was quoted as saying at a meeting between the council and Iranian lawmakers.

Despite progress in the negotiations, the key sticking point is that Tehran wants the issue of uranium traces found at several old but undeclared sites in Iran to be dropped and closed forever, an Iranian official said.

Some alternative solutions have been discussed in protracted talks between Iranian negotiators and Western powers, sources said, without elaborating.

Russia’s envoy to the talks, Mikhail Ulyanov, the most publicly optimistic among the delegation chiefs, told Reuters “we are one minute from the finish line” when asked about Iran’s indirect negotiations with the US.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Iran](#)

[Germany](#)

[Iran nuclear deal](#)

UN nuclear watchdog will 'never abandon' Iran probe
US President Joe Biden confuses 'Ukrainian' with 'Iranian' people in televised speech

[From Syria to Ukraine, a saga of serial abandonment of Western allies](#)

Author:

Nadia Al-Faour

ID:

1646248802759907000

Wed, 2022-03-02 22:18

DUBAI: In October 2019, as Turkey massed its forces on the border with northeastern Syrian, threatening to invade and carve out a so-called safe zone, Kurdish communities just miles away turned to their powerful ally in Washington for support. The US military could keep the forces of their fellow NATO member at bay, the Kurds believed.

Five years of close security cooperation and the sacrifice of more than

11,000 lives in their joint fight against Daesh had convinced the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces that the bond of trust that had grown between them and the Americans was unbreakable and that in the face of an even more formidable foe, their allies would surely have their back.

But what the Kurds had already seen was a tweet by President Donald Trump and a White House video on Dec. 19, 2018, announcing the withdrawal of all US forces from Syria – save for a few hundred to guard oil fields near Deir ez-Zor.



“We never had the slightest intention of defending Ukraine, not the slightest,” said Anatol Lieven. (AFP)

By October 2019, Russian troops and Syrian forces had taken over at least three abandoned US camps in northern Syria. “Russian mercenaries splashed their good fortune over social media and took selfies in front of US equipment, while Russian reporters gave walking tours of the base,” Business Insider said in a report on Oct. 16.

Meanwhile, the Turks had launched bombing raids against the SDF in the name of “Operation Peace Spring.” The war effort against the global menace of Daesh – the US administration’s top priority just five years before – meant nothing to Trump. The SDF soldiers who had helped them win were summarily left twisting in the wind.

If the abandonment of the Kurds was a one-off, it could be dismissed as a mere blip on an otherwise honorable record. But a recurrence of American about-turns in recent years, in the Middle East and Europe, points more to a

pattern than to a mistake. In Georgia, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and now Ukraine, peoples and governments that believed they could count on the superpower's military support have all felt the crushing blow of its absence just when they needed it most.



Washington's Gulf allies have learned the lesson the hard way. (AFP)

In a recent interview with the American Prospect magazine, Anatol Lieven, author of "Ukraine and Russia: A Fraternal Rivalry," said: "We never had the slightest intention of defending Ukraine, not the slightest. Even though Britain and America and the NATO secretariat to the Bucharest Conference in 2008 came out for NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia (the NATO HQ was completely behind it on American orders), no contingency plans were drawn up, not the most remote or contingent ones, for how NATO could defend Ukraine and Georgia. There was no intention of ever doing that at all."

Lieven added: "Claiming that we were going to admit them to NATO: It goes beyond actual irresponsibility. In my view, this was deeply immoral, to make such a commitment that we had no intention of fulfilling."

Last August, shocking scenes of planes careering down the runway of Kabul airport as desperate stowaways fell to their death from American military cargo planes' wheel wells, came to be the defining image of a 20-year US occupation. Not far behind were scenes of Taliban fighters walking into Kabul as victors of a long war, their arch-foe having fled, and the national army raised by the US having folded almost overnight.



"There is no doubt that the Russian intervention in Ukraine is an accumulation of a series of Russian military interventions in Georgia in 2008," said Ibrahim Hamidi. (AFP)

Two decades after promising to bring democracy and freedom to Afghanistan, the US had simply given up. First Trump, and then Joe Biden, had walked away from a clear moral obligation to a population that had made a huge sacrifice in blood for America's protracted "war on terror." Nine months on, Afghanistan is a broken country, ruled by an unpopular Islamic fundamentalist group handed power practically on a platter by a nation that has lost the will to lead and the patience to keep fighting.

In the Middle East, where the US has trod with a heavy footprint since 9/11, there is little faith that a country suffering so much from political polarization itself has a coherent vision to offer.

Since 2000, the pendulum has swung between the missionary zeal of George W. Bush's advisers and the cold-hearted realism of Barack Obama loyalists, and between the transactional mindset of Trump and the "Obama lite" image of Biden.



The future of Europe and the EU looks much different today than it did just a week ago Carl Bildt, Co-chair of European Council on Foreign Relations. (AFP)

At different times in the past two decades, Washington's foreign policy priorities have been dictated either by human rights, commercial interests, democracy promotion or individual whims. Such a protean approach has taught

even friends to be wary.

Washington's Gulf allies have learned the lesson the hard way. The warm embrace of one administration as an essential regional security partner was replaced by the aloofness of the next, plus overtures to Iran.

UKRAINE: A CAUTIONARY TALE FOR WEST'S ALLIES

DEC. 1, 1991

Ukraine votes for independence in referendum amid dissolution of Soviet Union.

JAN. 14, 1994

Ukraine signs agreement to transfer all strategic warheads to Russia and dismantle strategic launchers.

FEB. 8, 1994

Ukraine joins NATO's Partnership for Peace, which is open to all non-NATO European countries and post-Soviet states.

DEC. 15, 2000

Chernobyl nuclear power plant shut down, 14 years after the accident.



APR. 26, 2001

Ukrainian parliament passes no-confidence motion to oust Prime Minister Viktor Yushchenko.

NOV. 22, 2004—JAN. 23, 2005

Orange Revolution takes place amid rigged elections that gave victory to pro-Russian candidate Viktor Yanukovich.

SEPT. 9, 2008

EU and Ukraine sign "association agreement" but stop short of an entry pledge.



NOV. 21, 2013

Yanukovich withdraws from talks with EU, resumes dialogue with Russia to join Eurasian Customs Union. Protests erupt.

NOV. 2013- FEB. 2014

Protests turn violent, killing more than 100 opposition members and injuring thousands. Yanukovich flees to Russia.

MARCH 21, 2014

Russia annexes Crimea. Russia expelled from Group of Eight.

JULY 17, 2014

Malaysian Airlines plane shot down by missile over eastern Ukraine territory controlled by Russian proxy forces. The strike kills all 298 passengers and crew.

SEPT. 5, 2014

Russian units enter Ukraine to push back Ukrainian forces that were on the verge of regaining control of Donbas. First Minsk Agreement signed

but terms not implemented, fighting continues.

FEB. 12, 2015

Second Minsk agreement signed, calling for immediate ceasefire and the withdrawal of all heavy weaponry in order to create a "security zone."

APRIL 9, 2021

More than 100,000 Russian troops mass on Ukraine's borders and Crimea, raising alarms in Europe.



DEC. 17, 2021

Russia releases detailed demands, asks NATO to cease all military activity in Eastern Europe and Ukraine, deny Ukraine membership to NATO or other former Soviet nations as members.

FEB. 21, 2022

Russian President Vladimir Putin recognizes the two breakaway regions of Ukraine, Donetsk and Luhansk, as independent entities.

FEB. 24, 2022

Russian forces launch full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

ARAB NEWS

The recognition of Iran as a malign actor and the threat posed by proliferating Iranian proxies in the region became history almost overnight,

while the Houthis were removed from the terror list, despite the group's implication in the destabilization of the region's poorest country, Yemen, and attacks on civilian facilities and population centers in Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Commenting recently on Twitter on America's Gulf partners' neutrality on the Ukraine crisis, Hasan Alhasan, a research fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, found "the subliminal message: this isn't our war" similar to the "one consistently (sent) by the US to the Gulf states on Yemen and Iran over the past several years."

Referring to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, Alhasan added: "Iran has wreaked havoc in the region and has been locked in proxy war with Saudi/UAE. But the US, and especially the EU, were ready to normalize ties with Iran following JCPOA regardless."



Two decades after promising to bring democracy and freedom to Afghanistan, the US had simply given up. (AFP)

More than two years on from Trump's Syria pullout, the SDF, a mixed Kurdish-Arab military unit raised and funded under the Obama administration to lead the fight against Daesh, has not recovered militarily from the US betrayal. Kurds across the border in Iraq, who also took part in the global coalition's campaign against Daesh, remain similarly wary. The notion about the US being an all-weather partner and natural ally in whom Kurds of the Middle East could blindly trust during times of need proved especially fanciful during the Trump presidency.

Six years before the Syrian withdrawal, Obama made another decision that likely changed the course of the country's civil war, while casting doubt on the ability or willingness of the West to demonstrate the courage of its stated convictions.

If any issue could stir Western leadership, the widespread use of nerve gas on civilians would surely be it. But when Syrian President Bashar Assad gassed opposition forces as they approached the gates of Damascus, killing more than 1,300 on a late summer morning in 2013, the "red line" Obama had set as a trigger for intervention suddenly became a negotiation point.

Rather than standing on the side of Syrian civilians, Obama ended up subjecting them to a further decade of misery. Impunity became entrenched in Syria, and within a few years Russia would be drinking from the same tap.



Washington's foreign policy priorities have been dictated either by human rights, commercial interests, democracy promotion or individual whims. (AFP)

In doing so, America's chief geopolitical adversary established a year's training ground preparation for the annexation of Crimea in 2016, which, in hindsight was a dress rehearsal for what was to come in February 2022 – the invasion of Ukraine.

"There is no doubt that the Russian intervention in Ukraine is an accumulation of a series of Russian military interventions in Georgia in 2008, Crimea in 2014 and Syria in 2015," Ibrahim Hamidi, senior diplomatic editor for Syrian affairs at Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper, told the Associated Press news agency recently.

Putin “believes that America is regressing, China’s role is increasing, and Europe is divided and preoccupied with its internal concerns, so he decided to intervene.”



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Russia-Ukraine Conflict](#)

[Syria](#)

[Afghanistan](#)

[Kurds](#)

[Editor’s Choice](#)

War sparks anxiety and dread for Ukrainians in the Arab world
A human tide flows out of Ukraine in search of shelter and security

[UK court orders Lebanese banks to pay \\$4m to saver](#)

Author:

Reuters

ID:

1646237569357630000

Wed, 2022-03-02 19:15

BEIRUT: A London court has ordered two Lebanese banks to pay a depositor \$4 million of his money locked in Lebanon's crippled banking system by informal capital controls in place since a financial meltdown in 2019, the first such ruling in Britain.

The High Court of Justice, Queen's Bench Division, ordered Bank Audi and SGBL to make the payments, amounting to about \$1.1 million and \$2.9 million respectively, to claimant Vatche Manoukian by March 4, a copy of the ruling seen by Reuters said.

"Bank Audi will abide by the ruling of the British court," a Bank Audi official told Reuters.

SGBL did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Lebanon's financial system collapsed in 2019 after years of unsustainable financial policies, corruption and waste. Banks imposed tight controls on accounts, including a de facto ban on withdrawals of dollar-denominated deposits and limits on withdrawals in local currency.

These controls were never formalized with legislation and have been challenged in local and international courts, with mixed results.

A UK court in December ruled in favor of a Lebanese bank in a case brought by a depositor, considering the bank had discharged its debt to the plaintiff by issuing checks for the value of his deposits.

Many Lebanese banks have resorted to discharging dollar-denominated funds via banker's cheques which cannot be cashed out in dollars and are instead sold on the market at about a quarter of their value.

Just a week prior, a French court had ruled in favor of a saver residing in France in a case she brought against a bank which had also issued checks for her account balance, saying the unilateral move by the bank, opposed by the claimant, meant the bank had not fulfilled its obligations.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[UK](#)

[court](#)

[Lebanon](#)

[banking](#)

[Bank Audi Lebanon](#)

[SGBL](#)

Lebanon foils Daesh plan to carry out suicide attacks in Beirut
Lebanese judge issues subpoena for cenbank governor Riad Salameh