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Answer given by Mr Kadis
on behalf of the European Commission
(13.3.2025)

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) reflects in large parts customary international law and sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the ocean and seas must be carried out. In accordance with the Convention, it is for each coastal State to establish and delimitate its maritime zones including with other States in case of adjacent waters. This also applies to Member States, which are competent to establish and delimit their maritime zones.

The delimitation of the continental shelf and Exclusive Economic Zones among the States concerned should be addressed through dialogue and negotiations in good faith, in accordance with international law, including as reflected in UNCLOS, and any dispute settled peacefully, including through the International Court of Justice. Türkiye must respect the sovereignty and sovereign rights of all Member States.

While the delimitation of the maritime zones is a matter falling under the competence of the Member States, in case of unilateral actions or provocations in breach of international law by a third country or countries, the EU will use all the instruments and the options at its disposal, including in accordance with Article 29 of the Treaty on European Union and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union¹, in order to defend its interests and those of the Member States.

Since 2019, the EU has in place a regime of restrictive measures² in view of Türkiye's unauthorised drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean. Sanctions apply to individuals or entities responsible for or involved in drilling activities not authorised by Cyprus (in its territorial sea, its exclusive economic zone or on its continental shelf). The regime has been prolonged every year since and is now valid until 30 November 2025.

¹ EU restrictive measures (sanctions) are a tool of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy to defend EU values and interests, preserve peace and support democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the principles of international law as well as strengthen international security. Decisions on sanctions are adopted by the Council by unanimity based on proposals by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (High Representative) or by a Member State. Regulations give effect to these decisions and are adopted by the Council by qualified majority on a joint proposal of the High Representative and the Commission.

² <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/41313/st13262-en19.pdf>