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'I/A' ITEM NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1)/Council
Subject: Participation of the European Union as Permanent Observer in the East
Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF)
- Approval

1. On 23 April 2021 the Commission submitted to the Council an official request for acquiring permanent observer status in the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF)¹.
2. The EMGF has the objective to foster cooperation, create a structured dialogue on natural gas issues, set an agenda to formulate regional policies and set common strategies in order to expedite the monetization of existing and future natural gas reserves located in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Commission expects that this cooperation would widen to joint initiatives also on topics related to clean energy transition such as renewables, green gases and hydrogen, energy efficiency, digitalisation, cybersecurity, research and innovation.
3. The Ministers of the founding members of the EMGF (Cypriot, Egyptian, Greek, Israeli, Italian, Jordanian and Palestinian Governments) signed the agreement on the EMGF Statute on 22 September 2020. France joined the organisation in March 2021 and the United States acquired permanent observer status.

¹ doc. 8123/21.

4. Against this background, the Commission proposes to apply, on behalf of the EU, for a permanent observer status in EMGF, which would allow for participation in the sessions of EMGF's governance bodies and advisory groups. The formal request to be addressed to the Under-Secretary of EMGF will expressly note the understanding that observer status of the Union in the EMGF does not, nor is it intended to create any legal obligations on either side under domestic or international law.
 5. In accordance with Article 16 TEU, it is necessary that the Council approves the participation of the Union as a permanent observer in the EMGF.
 6. The Working Party on Energy examined the submission at its meeting on 28 April 2021 and generally supported acquiring observer status for the Union in the EMGF.
 7. Coreper is therefore invited to recommend that the Council approves the participation of the Union as a permanent observer in the EMGF.
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