

Exclusive-Colombia's **Ecopetrol** exploring participation in offshore wind auction

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By Oliver Griffin

BOGOTA (Reuters) – Colombia's majority state-owned energy company **Ecopetrol** is analyzing its potential direct participation in the Andean country's first-ever offshore wind auction, the company said in a statement to Reuters.

The government of President Gustavo Petro, Colombia's first leftist leader, has said it wants to wean the Andean country from its dependence on fossil fuels while ensuring energy self-sufficiency.

Bidders in the auction for concessions off the country's Caribbean coast are required to demonstrate some sort of partnership agreement with a public or mixed-ownership company – such as **Ecopetrol** – in order to be awarded a concession.

But it had not been known whether **Ecopetrol** would seek to qualify for the auction process as a bidder itself.

"**Ecopetrol** is carrying out the technical, economic and legal analyses of its potential participation in the offshore wind auction process," the company told Reuters in a statement in response to questions about its participation.

Potential private bidders will be able to choose from a variety of companies with public participation, energy minister Andres Camacho told Reuters in December.

Public or mixed-ownership companies that later join private company bids are not subject to evaluation at the qualification stage under the terms of the auction.

A source with knowledge of the matter had told Reuters that **Ecopetrol** was exploring its own qualification.

Public or mixed-ownership companies must qualify alongside other businesses that have technical experience, the company said.

"The qualification stage requires **Ecopetrol** to participate jointly with a partner," it said in the statement.

Ecopetrol is talking with a number of companies regarding potential partnerships to develop offshore wind projects, the company said, though it declined to name any businesses it has spoken to.

Ecopetrol – the country's biggest oil producer – is taking part in a number of forays into renewable energy, such as green hydrogen pilots and powering its operations with solar energy.

Offshore wind energy represents a good opportunity to incorporate non-conventional renewable energy into **Ecopetrol**'s operations, the company said.

"Participating in the offshore wind auction will allow us to access reliable renewable energy to leverage the entry of green hydrogen

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projects and their derivatives," the statement added.

The auction process is being overseen by the government's National Hydrocarbons Agency (ANH) and the registration deadline is June 21.

(Reporting by Oliver Griffin, editing by Deepa Babington)

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