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**HEADLINE: Kazakhstan aims to export 130 million tonnes of crude a year by 2015**

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Kazakhstan's energy minister Vladimir Shkolnik said Tuesday he hoped to export 130 million tonnes of crude oil mainly to Europe within a decade as production is tripled every year.

Speaking on the sidelines of a regular United Nations meeting on Caspian Sea energy supplies, Shkolnik said the country currently had about eight million tonnes on tap but reiterated that it was aiming to expand that to 150 million.

"In 10 years we are aiming to deliver to Europe, maybe not only to Europe, 130 million tonnes of crude oil per year," he told journalists.

Shkolnik's export target, which is equivalent to almost three million barrels per day, or more than 900 million barrels per year, took into account domestic energy needs estimated at 20 million tonnes a year.

The country is regarded in the West as a potential alternative to traditional producers in the Middle East.

Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev said last month that the oil-rich former Soviet republic would pump large amounts of its crude through the newly inaugurated Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline from neighbouring Azerbaijan into Turkey.

The central Asian state's largest export pipeline at the moment, the Caspian Pipeline Consortium, takes oil from western Kazakhstan through southern Russia to the Black Sea.

The Kazakh government is also aiming to put some of the blocks of offshore oil reserves it holds in its part of the Caspian up for tender open to foreign companies next year, the energy minister indicated.

"Part of the blocks will be developed together with our national oil and gas company. Part of the blocks will be put on open tender. This procedure I hope will start next year," Shkolnik said.

He acknowledged that high oil prices were an economic boon for the

impoverished and sparsely populated country, but the government placed greater premium on stability in the market.

"We need oil prices to be stable enough for a long time. That is more acceptable for us because we can construct our financial investment policy and future investment," he added.

Caspian Sea Oil producing nations at the energy security forum organised by the UN Economic Commission for Europe repeated that they needed more outside investment in the oil and gas industry.

A Russian oil executive admitted that high prices would help spur development of fields in the region that might not be exploited when prices were lower.

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