
French minister blames Turkish interference for GDF's Nabucco snub

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France's junior trade minister on Monday blamed Turkish political interference for Gaz de France's (GDF) failure to become a partner in the European Union's Nabucco pipeline.

"There has been a Turkish decision that was not independent of political considerations," Herve Novelli told reporters here during a visit to Turkey.

"We take notice (of this decision) and we regret it... It is really a pity because (GDF's) offer had all the qualities to be accepted, but we are looking forward now and that is why we are here," he said.

The Nabucco pipeline is a five-billion-euro (7.4-billion-dollar) venture to feed 31 billion cubic metres of gas each year from the Caspian Sea to Europe from 2012 at the earliest.

German power giant RWE was named earlier this month as the sixth partner in the project, at the expense of GDF. The other partners are OMV of Austria, MOL of Hungary, Transgaz of Romania, Bulgargaz of Bulgaria and Botas of Turkey.

A source close to the project said at the time that Turkey vetoed GDF's participation in retaliation to the French parliament's recognition in 2001 as genocide of the World War I mass killings of Armenians in Turkey's predecessor, the Ottoman Empire.

Novelli said at the time that "all was not lost" and that "there is still room" for GDF in the Nabucco project.

But on Monday, the minister said that GDF had withdrawn its candidacy from Nabucco.

Following its rejection from the project, GDF said it was weighing participation in a Russian-Italian gas pipeline project.

Novelli was expected to meet his Turkish counterpart Kursat Tuzmen and Energy Minister Hilmi Guler in Ankara on Tuesday before wrapping up his visit on Wednesday.
