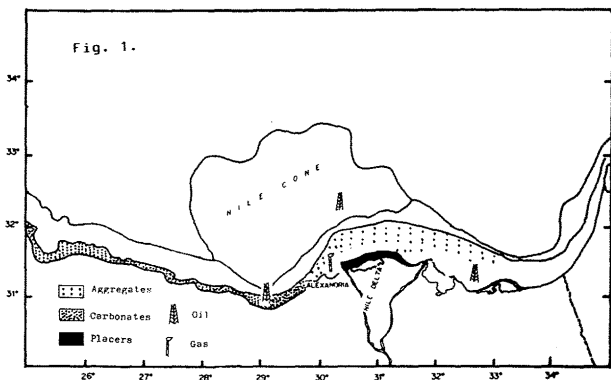


Mahmoud Kh. EL-SAYED

Department of Oceanography, Faculty of Science, Alexandria University, Alexandria (Egypt)

Ocean mining is considered to be a new frontier for mineral development; yet it is a long established industry in many countries. The IOC-UN(OALOS)/OSNLR have stressed on the importance to develop the techniques for the exploration and exploitation of the non-living marine resources. There are serious efforts to develop an ocean science in relation to the non-living marine resources in the Mediterranean.



The Egyptian Mediterranean offshore is considerably large (Fig.1); however, its non-living resources are not yet seriously evaluated. This area could be a source for several non-fuel and fuel marine resources.

Most of the non-fuel potentially valuable resources in this region are not presently exploited for several technical and marketing demand reasons. Aggregates and carbonates are widely distributed in the offshore region, surface exposed placers, on the other hand, have been intensively mined and hence exhausted. Large estimated amounts (reserves) of subsurface (Pleistocene?) placers in the coastal zone along the Nile delta contain zircon, tourmaline, ilmenite and rutile in appreciable quantities. Marine oil and gas fields are explored in the Nile cone and to the west of Alexandria; gas is intensively exploited from marine gas field east of Alexandria.

The offshore oil discoveries in the eastern Nile cone in Oligocene and early Miocene indicate the need for deeper explorations.

Special attention was paid to the coastal zone as a resource (CZAR), as this area is highly attractive for socio-economic development. It comprises major cities, industrialization, harbours and several summer resorts and recreational centres. However, this area experiences continuous erosion and is vulnerable to the expected rise of sea level.

This paper is a contribution in assessing the non-living marine resources along the Egyptian Mediterranean offshore, with respect to their origin and factors that influenced their development and to review past and present mining activities. However, a more detailed resource inventory is required to provide a more certain assessment.