

AOW

AFRICA OIL WEEK



9-13 October 2023

CTICC2, Cape Town, South Africa

a Hyve event

African exploration

What to expect in 2023?

After the success of exploration campaigns in Namibia, Côte d'Ivoire, Congo, Algeria, Egypt, and Gabon in 2022, Africa's exploration landscape is set for intense activity throughout 2023. By the time the industry reconvenes in Cape Town on October 9-13, the continent's established and frontier basins could have delivered on even more expectations.

Here are the key exploration campaigns to watch out for in 2023:

Orange Basin |  Namibia |  South Africa

Exploration in the Orange Basin will continue to make headlines, first in Namibia then in South Africa.

Shell started 2023 with a third light oil discovery on PEL 39 at the Jonker-1X well. The successful campaign follows the drilling of Graff-1 and La Rona-1 last year, which opened a new petroleum province in the Orange Basin offshore Namibia. Since then, several international operators have farmed into neighbouring blocks, including Chevron in 2022 and Woodside Energy in 2023.

TotalEnergies is about to resume drilling just west of Shell's block where it made a discovery at Venus-1 last year. The French major is spending \$300m on its exploration programme in Namibia this year to deploy two drilling rigs. The Tungsten Explorer drillship will start with the Venus-1A appraisal well at the end of Q1 2023 before moving to drill new exploration wells into the adjacent Block 2912, also operated by TotalEnergies. Drilling on that second block will target the Nara-1 well and a potential Nara-1A appraisal well, which will both include drill stem tests (DSTs). The second rig, Deepsea Mira, is not expected before the middle of this year and will be mobilized for DSTs operations both at Venus-1A and Venus-1.

While Namibia will capture most of the industry's attention over the coming months, South Africa could be next towards the end of 2023. **Africa Oil Corp**, operator of Block 3B/4B, has worked with partners Eco Atlantic Oil & Gas and Ricocure on reprocessing 3D seismic data and preparing for a 2-well drilling campaign this year. A new farm-in partner is expected on the block soon to progress the drilling programme which would likely target the Wolf prospect.

Gulf of Guinea | Gabon | Congo

Some of Africa's most established petroleum provinces in the Gulf of Guinea are also sharing the spotlight with Namibia this year, especially the Republic of Congo and Gabon.

In Congo, **Eni** has already started exploratory drilling on Marine VI bis, a block that holds several prospects that have been matured over the past few years, including Mbenga, Poalvou Deep, and Ikalou SW.

While Congo remains the largest producer in Central Africa, output has stagnated, and the country's oil & gas industry would benefit from fresh discoveries. Last year, two exploration wells already showed promising signs, including **Mercuria's** Lidongo Marine-1 well and **Perenco's** TCHNEM 1-01 well that made a discovery at the pre-salt Vandji prospect on the PNGF Sud license.

Gabon is also betting on additional exploration spending by operators this year as it embarks on several drilling campaigns delayed since the COVID-19 pandemic. All eyes are currently on **CNOOC** who started drilling earlier this year with the Stena IceMAX. The drillship is mobilized for two wells, including Tigre-1 on block BC9 previously operated by Shell. In 2014, the major's Leopard-1 well had encountered a substantial gas column with around 200 metres of net gas pay in the same license. An oil discovery at Tigre would further unlock Gabon's deep-water potential. The country has so far produced oil and gas only from onshore and shallow water areas.

Gabon's producing blocks could also deliver new discoveries as operators pursue infrastructure-led exploration, hoping to replicate **VAALCO** Energy's success at its South Tchibala 1HB-ST well on Etame Marin last year.

On Tchatemala South, **Perenco** is likely to drill the Simba Extension this year to unlock additional reserves from the block. Similarly, **BW Energy** could decide to add exploration wells to its drilling campaign on Hibiscus/Ruche Phase 1 that started in January. The company's contract with the Borr Norve includes four firm wells plus four option wells, including two exploration ones.

Mozambique

2023 is expected to see **Eni Mozambique** finally spud the Raia-1 well on Block 5A within the Angoche Basin. The block had been awarded to Eni during Mozambique's 5th Licensing Round and its Exploration and Production Concession Contract signed in October 2018. A farm-out agreement was subsequently signed to allow Qatar Energy to acquire a 25.5% participating interest in the license.

Aquadri's Capella drillship is expected to spud the well in the middle of this year. A discovery there would further confirm Mozambique's exploration potential and open up a new offshore basin in south-eastern Africa.

Zimbabwe

After **Invictus Energy** identified 13 potential hydrocarbon bearing zones in Zimbabwe last year, the independent operator will recommence drilling in 2023 with the aim of confirming a discovery. Its Phase 2 drilling campaign is likely to include the Mukuyu-2 appraisal well and the Baobab-1 well. A discovery there would have significant impact on Southern Africa's energy security, especially for landlocked countries seeking to procure cheaper and cleaner fuels for power and industries.

MSGBC |  Mauritania |  Senegal |  Gambia |  Guinea Bissau

While the MSGBC Basin will start producing offshore oil and gas this year, it will also be subject to new exploratory drilling that could further demonstrate its world-class hydrocarbons potential.

In Guinea-Bissau, **PetroNor E&P** has until October 2023 to drill one exploration well on the Sinapa (Block 2) and Esperança (Blocks 4A and 5A) licences. The operator has undertaken a full review of a potential well location, with the Atum prospect being the key drill target. However, both the operator and its partner FAR want to secure a farm down agreement ahead of drilling.

A successful drilling in Guinea-Bissau would rekindle interest for offshore exploration in the region after the disappointing results of Bambo-1 in The Gambia at the end of 2021.

 **Angola**

Angola houses the highest number of offshore rigs in sub-Saharan Africa as IOCs proceed with several brownfield and greenfield development plans on several deep-water blocks.

Infrastructure-led exploration has proven very successful for Eni there, but also for ExxonMobil who announced a discovery at Bavuca Sul-1 on Block 15 last year. All IOCs have active rigs in the country and could make additional discoveries this year.

While exploration activity in Angola has so far been focused on proven basins, IOCs are increasingly seeking to venture into frontier areas as well. In 2023, ExxonMobil notably recommitted to a \$200m exploration programme within Blocks 30, 44 and 45 in the Namibe Basin, with an exploratory well to be drilled as early as 2024.

 **Ghana**

Exploration in Ghana has slowed down despite Eni's successful discovery at Eban-1X in 2021. The spudding of several other key exploration wells has been repeatedly delayed, and hopes are that 2023 will see them spudded.

Key campaigns to watch notably include the drilling of the Edinam-1X and Mansonia-1X wells on the OSWT Block operated by **GOSCO**, of Kusia-1X on the Central Tano Block operated by **AMNI Petroleum International**, and of Aprozuma-1X on the CTP4 Block operated by **Eni**.

AFRICA OIL WEEK 2023

The established Prospect Forum, at the Africa Oil Week in Cape Town, will be taking place during 11th - 13th October. This well sought after forum is attended by companies decision makers such VP's of New Ventures, Heads of M+A, CEOs and VP's of Exploration, Geologists and CFOs from Majors, Large, Mid, and small cap operators looking to farm out equity in licenses from across the continent, change business, seek investments or new partnerships. A select number of asset owners looking to farm will take stage to profile their commercial terms, geology and overall vision for their assets.

Secure your pass today and join the leading decision makers at this year's Prospect Forum.