

## Shell to drill for oil in Namibian waters

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WINDHOEK Feb 17 (Reuters) - Shell is to drill offshore Namibia, a growing area of interest for oil and gas explorers, the southern African country's mines and energy minister said on Monday.

Shell has taken over exploration blocks 2913A and 2914B in the Orange Basin from Signet Petroleum, with the Anglo-Dutch group acquiring a 90 percent stake in the two blocks and Namibian national oil company Namcor keeping its 10 percent carried interest.

Signet Petroleum's 42 percent shareholder Polo Resources , which is listed on London's junior AIM market, said in a statement last week that Signet had sold its interests in the two blocks, "to a major international oil company in a confidential transaction".

Polo gave no indication of how much the interest had been sold for except to say that it expected a "significant return" for Polo, which would provide additional details as they become available.

Best known for its uranium reserves, Namibia is attracting interest from oil and gas companies keen to explore its offshore potential, which has been likened to Brazil's prolific Santos basin.

"The Ministry of Mines and Energy is very excited about the interest shown by a super-major such as Shell Exploration and Production in Namibia," Mines and Energy Minister Isak Katali said in a statement on Monday.

Royal Dutch Shell was involved in exploration work around the Kudu gas field in the Orange Basin, the only economically feasible fossil fuel find made so far in Namibian waters, but dropped out in 2002.

Spanish group Repsol said in October last year it would drill its first well in Namibian waters as early as February or March, the Welwitschia-1 well in the Walvis Basin, in partnership with London-based oil and gas firm Tower Resources.