

Australia's Woodside new CEO says to honour Browse commitments

- Focus on developing Browse, Pluto - new CEO
- Hopes to understand issues involved in Sunrise stalemate
- No comment on takeover speculation (Adds detail)

PERTH, May 13 (Reuters) - Australian energy firm Woodside Petroleum's new chief executive has signalled there will be no major change of strategy, saying he will focus on developing the company's three main liquefied natural gas projects.

Peter Coleman, who was this week announced as Woodside's new chief, said his priority would be to continue the work of his predecessor in developing the company's Browse and Pluto LNG projects in Western Australia.

He also said he would work towards resolving a stalemate with East Timor over the Greater Sunrise project.

"My focus is really going to be on ensuring that base business is executed in the way that it has been," Coleman told reporters in Perth.

"We've got the Pluto foundation project and we've got to get that started up safely this year and fill our commitments."

Woodside has said it expects the A\$14 billion, 3.6 million tonne-per-year first train at Pluto to come online in August.

He promised to honour existing commitments under Browse and said he needed to try and understand why the parties involved with the Sunrise project had different views.

Woodside wants to develop the Sunrise field, which straddles Australian and East Timorese waters, by building a multi-billion-dollar floating liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant. East Timor wants an LNG plant built on its shores.

Woodside owns 50 percent of Browse. Its partners are BP , Chevron , BHP Billiton and Royal Dutch Shell

Coleman, an Australian who has overseen multi-billion-dollar projects during a 27-year career at ExxonMobil, takes over from Don Voelte effective May 30.

He would not comment on the future of Royal Dutch Shell's 24 percent stake in Woodside or recent speculation the company was a takeover target, saying he was "not worried" about those matters.

Woodside, Australia's largest independent energy company, this year cuts its investment expenditure budget to \$3.4 billion from \$3.9 billion in 2010.

It faces challenges on the three LNG projects key to its growth -- securing gas for its Pluto expansion, securing agreement from its partners on its Browse project, both in Western Australia, and securing agreement from East Timor for its Sunrise LNG plans.

It recently made progress on lining up gas for a second train at Pluto and last week resolved a dispute with traditional landowners, which would allow it to build a gas processing plant at its chosen location, James Price Point, but its partners are still not on board.

Coleman said he was focused on improving shareholder returns.

(Reporting by Morag Mackinnon; Writing by Michael Smith; Editing by Ed Davies)

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/05/13/woodside-idUSL3E7GD0EF20110513>

Sun has set on Sunrise options, new Woodside CEO says

The Sydney Morning Herald
Business

May 13, 2011, AAP -- Incoming Woodside Petroleum Ltd chief executive Peter Coleman says the oil and gas giant won't revisit an onshore processing option for its stalled Sunrise liquefied natural gas (LNG) project.

The company has opted for a floating vessel processing concept, while the East Timor government insists processing should be done on that nation's shores.

Mr Coleman says the floating concept still stands.

"I think Woodside really has explored all of the options already," he told reporters in Perth on Friday.

"We've made our position very clear on that.

"My role will be to go in and ... understand where the parties are and why they differ in that view."

Mr Coleman takes the helm of Woodside on May 30, while current chief executive Don Voelte will remain with the company until June 30 to assist with the transition.