~~A SUPPORT INSTALLED AT SEA AND FITTED WITH EXTERNAL CONTAINERS~~ SEA PLATFORM HAVING EXTERNAL CONTAINERS

The present invention provides a support installed at sea, either in open sea, or in a protected zone such as a port, and in grounded or floating manner, i.e. either resting on, or anchored to the sea bottom, the support including both an installation on its deck for processing a liquid that is dangerous and/or corrosive, preferably liquefied natural gas (LNG), and also at least one tank for storing said liquid and incorporated within the hull of said support under said deck.

This type of support may in particular be a barge of the FPSO or FSRU type for processing and storing LNG, or it may be a ship, in particular having a hull and storage tanks made of steel or of concrete as described in WO 01/30648, and as explained below.

The methane-based natural gas is either a by-product of oil fields, being produced in small or medium quantities, in general in association with crude oil, or else it is a major product from a gas field, where it is to be found in combination with other gases, mainly C-2 to C-4 alkanes, CO_2, nitrogen, and traces of other gases. More generally, the natural gas comprises a majority of methane, preferably at least 85% methane, with the other main constituents being selected from nitrogen and C-2 to C-4 alkanes, i.e. ethane, propane, and butane.

When the natural gas is associated in small quantities with crude oil, it is generally processed and separated and then used on site as fuel in boilers, gas turbines, or piston engines in order to produce electricity and heat for use in the separation or production processes.

When the quantities of natural gas are large, or indeed substantial, they need to be transported so that they can be used in regions far away, in general on other continents, and in order to do this the preferred method is to transport the gas while it is in the cryogenic