# Syria – Terzi to meet the opposition – The crisis will be the focus of the EU Foreign Affairs Council (Brussels, 14 May 2012)

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Italy's diplomatic activity continues in an attempt to resolve the Syrian crisis, through contacts with opponents to the Assad regime. Foreign Minister Giulio Terzi has already met the Ambassadors of the Arab League countries and in a few days will be receiving the head of the Syrian National Council, Burhan Ghalioun, in Rome. The announcement was made by the Foreign Ministry's spokesperson, Giuseppe Manzo. He specified that their discussion will take place in the context of meetings with representatives of the Syrian opposition promoted by the Italian Government to "give them an opportunity to meet, talk and extend the scope for participation, including religious, by opponents of the regime". The Syrian crisis will also be the focus of the European Union's Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) scheduled for Monday 14 May in Brussels.

The activity in and around Syria should be set in the framework of Italy's "renewed role as a protagonist" in the Mediterranean and Middle East, added Manzo. He also noted, in this respect, the Italian-Turkish Summit of Tuesday 8 May, during which the two countries' strategic partnership was strengthened.

Libyan Foreign Minister in Rome

Italy is also active on the Libyan front. On Saturday 12 May Minister Terzi will receive his Libyan counterpart, Ashur Saad Ben Khaial, in what will be the latter's first bilateral in a European country. The meeting is a follow-up to Premier Mario Monti's visit to Tripoli in January 2012. Items on the agenda include the transition process and Italy's role in institution-building and in fostering Libya's integration process with the EU and the UN. At Italy's request, the Libya dossier has been included in the agenda of the Foreign Affairs Council, which will discuss Europe's support for the transition process and for Libyan institutions.

FAC: Middle East peace process, Myanmar and Ukraine

The FAC will also examine the Middle East peace process, Afghanistan (in the run-up to the NATO Summit), Myanmar-Burma and Ukraine, especially as regards the Iulia Timoshenko case. On this question, Italy will present a "clear position" in Brussels, noted Manzo. He

pointed out that the MFA's political director, Sandro Bernardin, had summoned the Ukrainian Ambassador to Italy to inform him of "the attention and concern with which Italy is following developments on the protection of human rights in the country, and more specifically the Timoshenko case". Bernardin also asked the Ambassador to ensure that the former Ukrainian premier's rights to legal assistance and medical care are respected.

The Italian Ambassador in Kiev, Fabrizio Romano, has asked the authorities there for a meeting between Undersecretary Marta Dassù and the leader of the Ukrainian opposition, who has been moved from prison to hospital.

Minister Terzi will also be taking part in a segment of the FAC dedicated to the development of, and strategies for, cooperation, at which the annual report on the EU's development goals will be adopted. Cooperation is a sphere which is "very close to the MFA's heart", noted Manzo.

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