Closed ministerial meeting on Syria

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PRESS COMMUNIQUE' BY THE ITALIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Foreign Minister Giulio Terzi hosted today a working meeting with Ministers from the US, Arab and European countries in support of the Syrian National Coalition, with the participation of a delegation of the Coalition led by Sheikh Moaz al Khatib.

During the meeting Sheikh Moaz al Khatib briefed Ministers on the recent developments on the ground denouncing the suffering endured by the Syrian people as a result of the increased escalation of the conflict and of the crimes committed by the regime forces and their affiliated militias, including the indiscriminate bombings and use of scuds targeting civilians in Aleppo and Raqqah He highlighted the desperate conditions of a growing number of refugees and Internally displaced Persons and renewed a strong plea for assistance by the International community to stop the bloodshed. He also resolutely condemned all acts of terrorism targeting civilians.

The Ministers expressed their distress for the appalling conditions of the Syrian civilian population under constant threat of violence: the regime must immediately stop the indiscriminate bombardments against populated areas, which are crimes against humanity and cannot remain unpunished. They deplored the unabated arms supply to the regime by third countries. They also sympathized with Syria's neighbours that are carrying a heavy burden due to increasing refugees' flows and pledged to support them in coping with their difficult task and in safeguarding their stability.

Resolved to take action, the Ministers pledged more political and material support to the Coalition as the sole legitimate representative of the Syrian People and to get more concrete assistance inside Syria and to provide faster assistance to Local Councils and the Assistance Coordination Unit. They underlined the need to change the balance of power on the ground. In this vein they reviewed their plans for current and future assistance and will coordinate their efforts closely so as to best empower the Syrian people and support the Supreme Military Command of the Free Syrian Army in its efforts to help them exercise self-defence while assisting the Coalition in its vital role in view of establishing a democratic system where all citizens are equal before the law, regardless of ethnicity, gender, religious and political beliefs. They emphasised the unity and the territorial integrity of Syria.

They praised the ongoing Coalition’s efforts to complete its internal operational structures in order to effectively cope with the growing humanitarian, political, diplomatic challenges lying ahead. They also encouraged the Coalition to continue to reach out to all the constituent communities of the Syrian society.

The Coalition’s delegation gave an account on the process of gradual setting up of the main internal structures of the Coalition and informed of the imminent appointment of the head of the interim government that would operate inside Syria.

Ministers were also updated on the parameters of the political initiative which was established by the Coalition during its latest meeting.

Ministers called on the regime to take this opportunity and accept the appropriate conditions for this process, including the issue of President Assad’s stepping aside, stopping massacres and freeing prisoners kept in appalling number and conditions. The principle of establishing humanitarian corridors was positively considered. Ministers stressed that the window of opportunity for negotiations cannot be used by the regime to buy time.

Ministers called on all international and regional players to act responsibly and seize this opportunity for setting favourable conditions, with clear benchmarks, to facilitate a positive outcome of a negotiated solution, in line with the objectives of the Geneva roadmap as recently outlined by UN LAS Envoy Brahimi, whose relentless efforts are to be commended and fully supported.

The Ministers decided to maintain ongoing discussion on how to step up their support to the Coalition, through constant contacts at high officials level and meeting regularly, as needed.

Source : https://www.esteri.it/en/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/comunicati/2013/02/20130228_riunione_siria/