Italy-Russia: Terzi on visit to Moscow. Agenda includes missile defence, Syria and Iran

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The Italian and Russian Foreign and Defence Ministers will be holding discussions in Moscow tomorrow on the anti-missile shield, the situation in Syria, Iran's nuclear programme and other international questions. The announcement was made in an interview by Minister Giulio Terzi with Russia's Interfax agency. "The meeting will be an opportunity for in-depth consultations on European security, bearing in mind the current dialogue between Russia, the USA and NATO on missile defence programmes, a dialogue that is not always easy. We'll also be exchanging views on the most significant regional questions, most notably the situation in Syria, the Iranian nuclear programme, which is a source of great concern both for Russia and for Italy, and our common efforts to advance the stabilisation of Afghanistan", explained Terzi. The meeting, in 2+2 format, aims to extend and deepen the strategic partnership between Rome and Moscow on security and foreign policy.

Anti-missile shield, Syria and Russia-EU relations

As regards the anti-missile shield in Europe, Terzi feels that Moscow's concerns should be taken into consideration but that "the current divergences should not be over-dramatised, because we all have a clear desire to listen to each other". On Syria, the Minister reiterated that "Damascus must immediately respect its obligations under the United Nations Security Council Resolution and that Russia is an effective partner in finding a way to bring the violence to an end". Turning to Russia-EU relations, Italy is working for the adoption of a visa-free system, given that visas are an obstacle to the full development of mutually advantageous links. "In the meantime", said Terzi, "our consulates in Russia are doing their utmost to facilitate the issuing of visas under the Schengen rules".

Reaffirming excellent bilateral relations

The Italy-Russia ministerial will also be an opportunity "to reaffirm – in a highly visible and concrete way – our excellent bilateral relations". The Minister added that the two countries are currently planning a new inter-Government Summit, to be held before the end of 2012. Italy, for example, is ready to help Russia not just for the Sochi Winter Olympics in 2014 but also for the arrival of Formula One in the same Black Sea town. Terzi pointed out that Italian companies have already helped create the infrastructure for "Sochi 2014".

South Stream

On the energy front, Italy is supporting the South Stream gas pipeline project but will continue to have diversified energy suppliers and sources. In the future, however, “the balance will not change to Russia’s detriment”, explained Terzi. “Italian energy company ENI is engaged in developing the South Stream pipeline, as one of the major shareholders”, he continued. “The Italian Government fully supports this project, in the framework of our long and successful cooperation with our Russian partners”.

Italian-Russian cooperation is extensive and comprehensive. Italy is Russia’s second trading partner in Europe, with trade amounting to 46 billion dollars in 2011: an increase of 22% on 2010. Exports to the Russian market are vital for many of Italy’s small and medium-sized companies. And industrial cooperation, too, is strategic in nature.

Source : https://www.esteri.it/en/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/approfondimenti/2012/04/20120419_terzimosca/