EU: new sanctions against Syria and Iran – A political solution the only way in Damascus, says Terzi

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The European Union upped the pressure on Iran and Syria by tightening the sanctions against those two nations. The decision was taken in the Foreign Affairs Council in Luxembourg in which Minister Giulio Terzi participated, and is aimed at bringing Teheran back to the bargaining table on its nuclear programme and convincing the Damascus regime to end the repression.

Ashton urges States not to send arms to Syria

As regards Syria, this is the 19th package of European sanctions since the start of the crisis in March 2011. The new measures extend the visa ban and freezing of assets to 28 persons and two firms, bringing respective totals to 181 and 54. The EU package also bans its citizens residing abroad from purchasing arms for Syria, transporting them to third countries and supplying insurance services for those transports. High Representative Catherine Ashton explained that the European Union “warns against the risk of increased militarisation” in the Syrian conflict and called upon all States to “abstain from sending arms to Syria and to pursue the path of the EU by putting an end to supplies that fuel combat”. Terzi underscored that “the only way out of the Syrian crisis is a political solution”, and that it was necessary to “work intensely with all the region’s countries and, in particular, with the members of the Security Council to overcome the current stalemate”.

Iran: Terzi calls for rejection of nuclear

New restrictive measures were also decided with regard to Iran’s nuclear programme, especially concerning the hydro-carbon fuel sector, financial transactions with Iranian banks, commerce in telecommunications and energy sectors and maritime transport. The ministers also decided to add a series of persons and firms to the visa ban and asset freezing lists. “The message is that a solution must be found rapidly in order to put an end to uranium enrichment at levels compatible with a nuclear weapon”, Terzi asserted, explaining that “our desire is to pursue a “two-track” approach to bringing Iran back in earnest to the bargaining table to discuss concrete ways to resolve the situation in line with the UN Security Council”.

Mali: rapid deployment of peace mission

The EU foreign ministers urged that the “planning of a possible military mission within the framework of the EU’s Common Defence and Security Policy (CDSP)” in Mali. The EU asked, in particular, for “the drafting of a crisis management concept concerning the reorganisation and training of the Mali defence forces” by the 19 November meeting.

Assessments differ with Moscow’s but work goes forward, says Terzi

The main agenda items were also discussed on Sunday with Russia during an informal dinner with Minister Sergej Lavrov. “A clear difference of assessments emerged on themes such as Iran, Syria and the Sahel, even though there is strong operational convergence on the Sahel, particularly on the deployment of a peace force”, Terzi reported. Specifically, Syria “is a theme on which to continue working”, the minister said, adding that “it is everyone’s conviction that Brahimi must be supported. My other colleagues and I felt there were positive signs from Lavrov. It is in no one’s interests to let tensions with neighbours like Turkey and Jordan grow. Russia’s strong relations with Turkey were then confirmed, and this is important. There could still be more solid consensus on the management of the Syrian crisis than there has been so far”. “There is the common awareness that the only way out of the Syrian crisis is a political solution”, he added.

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