Syria: Bonino at Geneva 2 Conference – “If it continues, shame on the entire world”

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If a compromise is not found on the Syrian crisis “we will all have to be ashamed of ourselves”, was the clear message launched by Minister Emma Bonino at the Geneva 2 Conference that opened today at Monteux, with 45 participating delegations that included those of the Syrian government and opposition.

All actors must be involved in the solution

The Italian foreign minister’s was among the morning’s speeches. “All of us here share the same concern that the present situation will lead to radicalism and terrorism. But I wish to say very clearly that the fight against terrorism cannot justify the violation of human rights and dignity”, she stated, calling for an “immediate ceasefire” to allow humanitarian aid access as a “start to the negotiations”. “If this conflict continues it will cast shame on the entire world”, she warned, noting at the same time that “the Syrian parties must be supported by everyone in the negotiations, even by those not present here today. We must manage to involve all the actors” playing a role in Syria, she urged, adding that “the only way out is application of the Geneva 1 communiqué”.

At lunch Bonino and Kerry discuss how to get aid into Syria

Bonino then had lunch with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, with whom she had an exchange of views on how to get humanitarian aid to the Syrian population. The meeting took place during a pause in the work sessions at Montreux. The minister later returned to the topic the tragic human suffering. “The images that have been circulating recently show unspeakable tragedies that cannot be described in words. But we do not need photos to realise how tragic this situation is”, the minister underscored during the press conference.

Speaking then about the particularly bitter tone of the speeches by Syrian government and opposition representatives, Bonino explained that this “explicit clash” between the Syrian delegations was a positive sign, that things half-said lead nowhere, and that it could not have been otherwise. According to the minister, Geneva 2 “is the start of a very difficult journey. The two delegations will repeat themselves, also in tone”. The reconstruction of Syria will be “a long-term commitment, but in the immediate present it is the Syrian government’s responsibility to end the violence”, the minister added, with a nod to the possibility that

negotiation between the two sides could begin on Friday. With one certainty: “If we do not find a way to compromise we will all have to be ashamed of ourselves”.

45 delegations at Montreux

The Geneva 2 at Montreux departs from the conclusions of the Geneva 1 Conference of June 2012 (which provided for a “transitional government with full executive powers including members of the government and opposition”), opened to the participation of 45 delegations.: those of the Damascus government, led by foreign minister Walid Muallem and of the opposition led by president of the Syrian Opposition Coalition Ahmad Jarba were joined by the representatives of 39 countries: the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and the main European nations, including Italy, as well as Australia, India and Indonesia. Delegations were also sent from the Holy See and the Gulf Countries, in addition to the UN, EU, Arab League and Organisation for Islamic Cooperation.

Ban to Syrians, your chance for a solution

Addressing the Syrian delegations at the opening of the conference Ban Ki-moon cited this as their “chance to show unity in the search for a political solution” in Syria, where “so many lives” have been lost. Mr. Ban also launched an urgent appeal “to allow humanitarian access” to the thousands of people in Syria who have “been without assistance for months” and are starving. A total of 45 delegations have been invited to the conference, including the Friends of Syria member countries, the EU, the Arab League and the Holy See. After today’s meeting in Montreux, negotiations between the Damascus regime and the opposition will resume on Friday in Geneva, with the mediation of Special UN and Arab League Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi.

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