Minister Terzi chairs the first meeting of the Inter-ministerial Table on Syria

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“The fall of the Assad regime, when it does happen, must not find us unprepared. Italy and its main partners are outlining guidelines for international actions and its own national commitment in the areas of humanitarian aid, economic support and institution-building in post-Assad Syria”.Minister Giulio Terzi was quoted on the sidelines of the first meeting of the “Inter-ministerial Table on Syria”, which he chaired with the assistance of Under-Secretary Marta Dasssù, just a few days after the “Core Group” meeting of the Friends of Syria in Rome on 29 August. Today’s meeting set up an inter-ministerial work group to define objectives and instruments for intervening in the various thematic areas. The humanitarian emergency is the top priority for the international community and for Italy, which has run many interventions over recent months for Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan – where it also set up a field hospital and distributed medical kits – and Turkey, the latest aid having been distributed in recent hours.One aspect much discussed today was the alarming number of internally displaced persons (at least one and a half million) and refugees in neighbouring countries (over 200,000 in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraqi Kurdistan), an aspect of the crisis that, in addition to its painful humanitarian fallout, could impact on regional stability and constitute a future concern regarding illegal immigration toward Europe.Politically and in terms of institution-building, the table reconfirmed Italy’s commitment to maintain the pro-active role it has had, not least on the occasion of Minister Terzi’s visit to Egypt and Lebanon (he will be heading to the Middle East again tomorrow) in continuing contacts with its main European and Western partners, regional actors such as the Arab League and the various components of Syrian opposition.

Above all, what emerged was the strong need to prepare to play a major role in the rebuilding of the institutions of post-Assad Syria, in full respect of Syrian ownership, in the sectors where Italy can bring its well-recognised skills and experience to bear: justice, training, public administration, recovery and conservation of artistic and cultural treasures.The theme of Syria’s economic reconstruction was also examined, in consideration of the traditionally strong bilateral economic bonds that, prior to the crisis, had placed Italy as the country’s top European trade partner. It was agreed that priority areas would be singled out and kind of mapping of the sectors that the government and businesses are going to have to focus in on in their post-Assad efforts.Present at the inter-ministerial table, chaired by Minister Terzi, were Diplomatic Advisor to the Prime Minister Pasquale Terracciano, Under-Secretaries for the

Interior Carlo Di Stefano, for Justice Sabato Malinconico, for the Defence Gianluigi Magri and for Economic Development Claudio De Vincenti, the Director for the Coordination and Studies Service of the Ministry of Culture Gianni Bonazzi, and Head of the Private Office of the Minister for International Cooperation Mario Morcone.

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