Syria: OPCW Director General, generous contribution from Italy

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“Italy has made an important contribution to international efforts to eliminate the Syrian chemical arsenal, the latest being its permission to use the port of Gioia Tauro” for transboarding the chemical agents to the U.S. ship the Cape Ray, which will then destroy them. With these words, as he accepted the University of Bologna’s Sigillum Magnum, Director General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Ambassador Ahmet Uzumcu thanked the Italian government for its international commitment. Thanks that follow on the heels of the announcement by Foreign Minister Emma Bonino, Minister for Infrastructure and Transport Maurizio Lupi and D-G Uzumcu himself that the Italian port of Gioia Tauro had been chosen for transboarding the Syrian chemical agents.

OPCW awarded Sigillum Magnum and Academy of Sciences Medal of Honour

The Director General of the OPCW, the organisation that won the Nobel Peace Prize for 2013, was awarded the gold Sigillum Magnum of the University of Bologna and the Gold Medal of the Academy of Sciences, two institutions that have been working with the OPCW for 10 years now. “It is an honour to receive this recognition from institutions that maintain the best traditions of Italian humanistic studies, traditions that are reflected in the precious collaboration between Italy and the OPCW”, Ambassador Uzumcu asserted as he accepted the honours, underscoring his intention to continue to strengthen relations between OPCW, the University of Bologna and the civil society. The D-G explained that the peace prize would be used to set up annual awards for exceptional contributions to the advancement of the Convention’s aims.

3 million euro from Italy for OPCW Trust Fund for the destruction of Syrian chemical agents

But in his speech, Uzumcu focused on Italy’s contribution to the activities of the OPCW over the years, recalling its assistance in the training of inspectors and the commitment of the Italian industries that host the OPCW Associate Programme interns. His words followed a meeting he held yesterday with Ministers Bonino and Lupi and a report to the Lower House. Speaking to the parliamentary commission, the OPCW Director General publicly thanked Italy “for the generous contribution of making an Italian port available”, recalling that the Italian government had donated 3 million euro to the OPCW Trust Fund for the destruction of the Syrian chemical arsenal, while our country had already placed a military transport plane at

the disposal of the organisation’s first inspectors going into Syria after the chemical attacks in August.

Bonino describes Gioia Tauro as the most important disarmament operation in the last 10 years

During her report to the Lower House, Minister Bonino announced that the Syrian chemical agents on the Danish and Norwegian ships leaving Syria would be transboarded to the U.S. ship Cape Ray at the port of Gioia Tauro, describing its as “the most important disarmament operation of the last 10 years, more important than the one that took place in Libya”. The minister then described the security apparatus that would be in place for the transboarding operation at the Calabrian port, specifying that “there will be no need for storage nor for land-based transit, except for passage from one pier to another”, she assured, adding that “so far only some of the containers of Syrian chemical agents have been loaded onto the Danish ship”, that will then bring them to Italy, while “the rest still has to arrive” at the port of Latakia to be loaded.

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