Minister Terzi meets with Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati

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The day after the NATO foreign ministers meeting in Brussels, Minister for Foreign Affairs met in Rome with Lebanese Prime Minister to discuss the Syrian crisis. Terzi reiterated the need for the international community to continue to promote a political solution to the crisis, based on Assad's exit from the scenario and, to that end, support the Opposition Coalition set up on Doha. He reassured Premier Mikati of Italy's enduring commitment, also in the context of the EU, to limiting the political, social and humanitarian repercussions of the Syrian conflict in Lebanon.

Deep concern was expressed during the meeting, particularly over the dramatic humanitarian consequences of the crisis in Syria. According to estimates, there are more than 130,000 Syrian refugees in Lebanon which, according to Terzi and Mikati, has created an emergency that could impact heavily on the Lebanese economy and on the country's ability to attract tourism and investments. In that context, the head of Italian diplomacy pointed out that Italy was intensifying its efforts on behalf of the Syrian refugees through the over one million euro in aid that had been distributed over recent months for the benefit of the women and children being sheltered in Lebanon.The meeting also offered an opportunity for an exchange of views on the main Middle East issues. Terzi stressed that the international community, and Europe in particular, was working to convince the Israelis and Palestinians to exercise moderation and to resume direct talks, the only way by which to relaunch the peace process.

Finally, the two ministers reviewed the common desire to intensify bilateral economic and trade relations.With 9% of the market Italy is Lebanon's second largest exporter, surpassing China and coming in just behind the United States, and the presence of Italian firms operating on that market is steadily increasing. Premier Mikati expressed his appreciation, in that regard, for the "Country Presentation" to be held in Milan in 2013 aimed at illustrating the potential of the Lebanese market to the Italian business community.

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