Syria: Bonino, Italy willing to work with inspectors

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Italy is willing to take part in the work of the international inspectors for the dismantling of the Syrian chemical weapons arsenal, according to Minister for Foreign Affairs Emma Bonino's statement from the Italian mission to the UN on the draft UN resolution on Syrian chemical weapons approved yesterday by the five members of the Security Council.

Italy, the minister said, "has professional expertise when it comes to gas, and mustard gas in particular; we have therefore expressed our interest and availability from the technical and quantitative standpoint"; "it is an undertaking and a responsibility we are interested in assuming".

The document is "very severe in some parts", she said, "from my viewpoint, for example, it seems too harsh to define the use of chemical weapons as an attack against peace and security and not as a proliferation problem".

Satisfaction with progress, but an uphill road

The minister said she was "optimistic about the events of the past two weeks, which is what Italy has been strongly urging since the beginning: the inspectors' report, Security Council, diplomatic conference". At the same time she underscored that this was the start of "a major process, both from the operational standpoint as well as political, and one that will surely be all uphill".

Bonino: more optimistic also about Libya

"I am concerned but optimistic about Libya; the government has prepared the first lists for security training", During the meeting with the Libyan delegation, Bonino explained "the other countries present reiterated their desire to observe that training", an essential point, ahead of the "conference in Rome that we must convene by year's end".

Intense week of bilateral meetings

After a week of bilateral meetings and conferences, the minister explained that she had confronted the theme of Mediterranean crisis management both in meetings with Libya as well as with General Paolo Serra, commander of the UN mission in southern Lebanon, and the Somali question, with "the intention to go forward, despite Al-Shabaab, on the federal idea, with a constitution within 2015 and elections in 2016.

The bilateral meetings in which Bonino participated this week were important “both as bilateral meetings, as well as in terms of our campaign for election to a non-permanent seat on the Security Council” for 2017-2018. There are three candidates for the seat, “the others from the European block are Holland and Sweden”, the minister explained, adding that “I have had some unexpected, but very important, confirmations, such as from Angola, for example”.

Bonino: some countries have backtracked on the death penalty

“There is a positive trend” on the death penalty, “but some countries have backtracked”. “There is concern about several countries”, Bonino added, referring to the U.S., Iran and “even Japan”. For that reason, she added, “the Community of Sant’Egidio intends to organise an initiative in Japan, while I will be with the “Hands Off Cain” group in Sierra Leone on 6 January”. Minister Bonino spoke after having participated in the ministerial meeting on the death penalty”.

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