# Syria: EU, new sanctions. Terzi: Difficulties for Annan Plan, but there is scope for results

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The European Union foreign ministers have approved a new package of sanctions (the 15th) against the Syrian regime. The EU has added 2 companies and 3 individuals to the list of entities and persons whose assets have been frozen because they are considered as “funding sources”.

With today’s decision, taken at the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels, the number of people hit by restrictive measures rises to 128 and the number of companies to 43. The names of the individuals and companies will be published tomorrow, 15 May 2012, in the EU’s Official Journal. “The EU sanctions target the Syrian regime, not the civilian population. As long as the repression continues, we will continue to put pressure on those responsible for it”, explained Catherine Ashton, the EU’s High Representative.

Difficulties for Annan Plan, but scope for results

The Annan Plan is encountering “difficulties, but the feeling is that there is still scope for it to achieve results”, reported Minister Terzi, who pointed out that it is too soon to speak of a UN intervention force. “But if the Plan has not achieved success within the next 60 days, we’ll need to aim for a new UN Security Council Resolution envisaging a strengthened observers’ mission that can guarantee its own safety”, said Terzi.

New “Covenant”

In Brussels, Terzi also provided positive information on his meeting on Sunday 13 May, at the Foreign Ministry in Rome, with the current President of the Syrian National Council, Bourhan Ghalioun. “The meeting was very positive because we heard, directly from the delegation, about the path they want to follow”, said the Italian Foreign Minister. Terzi explained that this pathway “is based on the new ‘covenant’ adopted in March in Istanbul, which clearly refers to full respect for the democratic freedoms, the construction of a new Syria based on a democratic constitution, free elections, and respect for minorities”.

Concern over the Timoshenko trial

The Foreign Affairs Council also addressed the Ukraine question, most notably the detention of former premier Julia Timoshenko. Terzi specified that it would be appropriate to maintain “a

close dialogue” with Kiev, as long as that dialogue is based on respect for human rights. As regards the treatment of the opposition leader, “the signals must be very clear”. Julia Timoshenko’s trial, “and in particular her treatment in prison, gives cause for concern”.

“Julia Timoshenko must have the medical treatment that is her right, and be treated with due dignity”, added Terzi. He explained that “decisions on the association agreement with the EU depend on developments over the next few days”. The hope is that Timoshenko will be granted a temporary release or transfer to another country for the appropriate medical treatment. No decision was taken, however, on attending the European Football Championship in Ukraine. The Ministers have decided not to announce “a precise position today, because the aim is to impress upon Kiev that the situation will be subject to close scrutiny in the days remaining”, noted Terzi.

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