# SYRIA: Ban Ki Moon, risk of catastrophe – Political solution and humanitarian aid, says Terzi

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The crisis in Syria risks becoming a catastrophe. The alarm was launched by UN Secretary General Ban ki-Moon during his speech at the Council of Europe forum in Strasbourg. “The escalation in the conflict”, he said, “has very serious consequences and is putting the stability of neighbouring countries and the entire region at risk”, while the Security Council continues to do nothing, as Minister Giulio Terzi asserted, underscoring Italy’s efforts toward a political solution to the Syrian crisis and humanitarian assistance.

Risk of “regional calamity”

In particular, Ban ki-Moon underscored the “extreme danger” of the conflict’s spread to Turkey and of the impact of the crisis on Lebanon. Pointing out the risk of “regional calamity”, he expressed his concern over the fact that Syria continues to be supplied with arms. “The militarisation of the conflict”, he continued, “does nothing but aggravate things”. The S-G then launched an appeal, in view of the approaching winter, for further efforts by the international community to confront the emergency situation of the Syrian population and the over 300,000 refugees in nearby countries.

Unifying the opposition

A political solution and aid to the Syrian people and refugees are the two paths that Italy is pursuing. In an article published by daily newspaper Corriere della Sera, he summarised Italy’s position: “the Italian government has made repeated and even high level efforts to convince our Russian friends to join with us in pressuring the Syrian regime to seek a solution. Similar efforts by our partners and by the Arab League, which have tried in vain to obtain a binding Security Council decision to implement the “road map” for political transition outlined this past June in Geneva, which Russia agreed to in principle. In response to the diplomatic stalemate in the Security Council and the radicalisation of the clashes on the ground, international diplomacy has enacted a complex and detailed strategy whose outcome we are confident will be fruitful. I discussed it in New York last week with my minister colleagues of the Core Group of the nations most heavily concerned with the Syrian dossier. The strategy pivots on the acceleration of efforts to assist and unify the opposition forces around a shared political platform and leadership”.

Italian aid

The other front on which we are heavily engaged", Terzi writes, "is, obviously, the humanitarian front, where Italy and its principal partners are doing much inside Syria and those neighbouring countries being forced to manage refugee flows. Within the context of the Interministerial Syria Table, we are considering the idea of additional allotments of aid to the Syrian people. We are in constant contact with the countries of the region – where my special envoy for humanitarian questions, the Hon. Boniver, was in recent days – in order to support them in confronting the emergency and maintaining internal stability. Finally, Italy is already working on building the Syria of tomorrow, organising training courses for young Syrians and promoting international coordination (meeting of the Core Group in Rome on 29 August).

Massari, Syria is our Mid-East priority

"Syria is the number one priority of our foreign policy in this region and at this stage", asserted Special Foreign Ministry Envoy for the Mediterranean and Middle East Maurizio Massari, speaking with journalists in Catania in the margins of the first day of the Annual Workshop of the Special Mediterranean and Middle East Group (GSM) of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. Participants in the sessions included parliamentary delegations from 20 nations. The topics on the agenda of meetings through tomorrow include the MENA region which includes the countries of the Middle East, and Northern Africa.

"Minister Terzi", Massari pointed out, "has repeatedly stated our position in favour of a political solution that must necessarily include President Assad's stepping down, and we are naturally confident in Special UN and Arab League Envoy Brahimi's mission. "Italy is in the forefront", said Massari, "of the Core Group of countries seeking this type of solution by uniting the democratic opposition, because it is necessary to build an alternative to the current regime, as well as a united opposition that can coalesce around a common programme and a common leader". According to Massari, "the road is still long since there are many facets to the Syrian opposition that need to come together, and then", he concluded, "there is the very real risk of the reinforcement of more radical and extremist groups, which are already launching initiatives that are leading to an escalation in the violence and distancing prospects for a political solution".

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