Minister for Foreign Affairs Emma Bonino meets with Arab League Secretary General Nabil El-Araby

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Prospects for the Syria crisis and the Middle East peace process were the main focus of Minister for Foreign Affairs Emma Bonino's meeting today in Rome with Secretary General of the Arab League Nabil El-Araby, with the accent first and foremost on U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry's peace process initiative.

The minister expressed her full support for the American efforts, underscoring that in this phase it was advisable to refrain from any initiative that might interfere with Washington's efforts.

As for Syria, Minister Bonino and S-G El-Araby agreed on their support for the Kerry-Lavrov proposal of an international conference that would unite the parties concerned at a negotiating table as a first step toward a political solution to the crisis. Both expressed deep concern regarding possible regional consequences and strongly condemned the escalation of the violence and its dramatic humanitarian repercussions on innocent civilians.

Emma Bonino said she was certain that the Arab League and its members would be able to play a fundamental role at this stage, assuring El-Araby of that Italy and other the Friends of Syria countries were encouraging the Syrian National Coalition to participate in the Geneva process and to make a greater show of cohesiveness.

Finally, Minister Bonino and El-Araby discussed cooperation between the EU and the Arab League in the Mediterranean, and – while maintaining coherence with European neighbourhood policy and with existing regional formats and forums – agreed on the central role it could play in stabilising democratic processes under way in the region and strengthening economic relations between the countries involved.

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