Italy-Russia – Bonino-Lavrov: pleased with progress on Syria and Iran

2013-11-26

Minister for Foreign Affairs Emma Bonino and her Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov met today in the margins of the intergovernmental economic summit, held in Trieste, to discuss principal international concerns such as the Iranian nuclear programme and the Syrian crisis.

Syria: widening the conference stage

The two ministers judged as favourable the decision to set the date for the Geneva 2 conference on Syria for 22 January next, thereby leaving time for both countries to try to convince countries not intending to participate. Bonino and Lavrov also closely examined the problem of the removal of Syrian chemical weapons that have already been destroyed.

Agreement on Iran

They expressed similar satisfaction with the accord on Iran of recent days, although caution prevailed along with the awareness that real compliance with the agreement would have to be verified over the next 6 months. They also briefly discussed the Israeli-Palestinian question.

Bonino cites frank and constructive Italo-Russian relations

Italy and Russia confirmed each other as key partners and leading actors in a frank and constructive relationship, despite points of divergence and different political priorities, Minister Bonino underscored, who hosted the Italo-Russian Media Forum on Monday in Rome, attended also by Lavrov, that was intended as an opportunity for an exchange of ideas among media, university and civil society representatives of both countries.

Mocow a key partner not only in economic terms, says Dassù

But in order for the bilateral relationship to be truly complete, collaboration has to be more than merely governmental. “Civil society dialogue must help governments discuss a bit of everything”, Deputy Foreign Minister Marta Dassù explained as she spoke at the forum, where she underscored that for Italy Russia is “a key partner not only for economic reasons. Italy’s reasoning is more strategic, ours with Russia is not only an essential economic and energy-based relationship”.

UE-Russia relations to be bolstered during Italy’s Presidency

Rome-Moscow relations could be given an additional boost with the start of the Italian EU presidency. “We intend to use our EU presidency in the second half of 2014 to contribute to a decisive relaunch of Euro-Russian relations, and the premise for doing so is that of verifying Russian positions in detail along with the margins for compromise in regard to numerous open issues”, Minister Bonino explained in an interview for Ria Novosti, during which the minister remarked how “consultations with Moscow are intense and detailed both at political level as well as the level of high ranking officials. We maintain continuous encounter not only on the Syrian crisis, which is the priority at the moment, but also on regarding other areas such as Central Asia, Africa, and the Middle East peace process”.

28 Agreements signed at the Trieste summit

The solidity of the Italo-Russian partnership was also confirmed at the intergovernmental summit in Trieste, which produced 28 signed accords, as Premier Letta announced in a press conference with Russian President Vladimir Putin. The agreements regard the sectors of finance, energy, industry, research, health, tourism, employment and social policies. “Italy needs to develop its international economic dimension”, Letta underscored, noting nevertheless that Italy is more attractive today than in the past “when we were limited and had many problems”. “Italy is Russia’s fourth trade partner”, Putin pointed out, specifying that trade “may go over 50 million dollars”.

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