SYRIA: Italy agrees with Arab League proposal – Joint “Peacekeeping Force” with the UN

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“Italy agrees on the urgency of halting every form of violence in Syria and, to that end, supports the proposal to send a joint United Nations/Arab League peacekeeping force to monitor on-site application of a ceasefire”, announced Minister Giulio Terzi after having “hailed” the outcome of the meeting of the Arab League foreign ministers in Cairo, underscoring that “Italy continues to lend its strong support to the Arab League’s efforts to arrive at a peaceful and democratic solution in Syria”. The minister expressed the hope that this proposal would meet with the broadest consensus possible in the UN.

“There is an especially strong convergence of views between Italy and the Arab League”, Terzi asserted, “on the need to ensure the Syrian opposition strong political support. Encouraging the interconnection and unification of all its various components”, Terzi concluded, “is an absolute priority in the launching of a political process in Syria that the international community supports”.

In addition to suggesting a joint peacekeeping force with the UN, the Arab League foreign ministers also accepted Tunisia’s offer to host a conference of the friends of Syria on 24 February, in anticipation of which they urged the Syrian opposition to close ranks so as to ensure the opening of channels of communication and political and financial support.

Thus the ball goes back into the UN’s court, with the awareness that any agreement will also have to involve Russia and China. In particular, speaking from Moscow, Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov announced that he was studying the Arab League’s proposal but that a ceasefire would have to come first.

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