Syria: Terzi-Arab League meeting: Italy’s efforts greatly appreciated

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The Arab League “greatly appreciates the Italian government’s commitment in supporting a political solution in Syria, a solution for which we’re working in Brussels too, in the Foreign Affairs Council. It also expressed its appreciation of the work we’re doing at the humanitarian level”. The comment was made by Foreign Minister Giulio Terzi at the end of a meeting at the Foreign Ministry in Rome with the Arab League member countries’ Ambassadors accredited to Rome.

On the humanitarian front, Terzi announced the “imminent” despatch of an Italian field hospital that will operate near the Syrian-Jordanian border, with Italian and Jordanian personnel. He also mentioned our initiatives to help transfer material to the Syrian border using Italian aircraft, to help the refugees. And, in more general terms, Italy’s “political commitment, which also is also reflected in the participation of 15 or so Italian observers in the UN Mission”.

Terzi noted that the UN mission “is still limited in size. The UN Security Council could move in another direction to bring the number of observers to-2-3,000. We’re talking about a very broad-based deployment of unarmed observers that could provide full cover for all those population centres that have seen the most serious violence”, added the Minister. He spoke of “more incisive action by the international community” and said that he expects “an active role by the mission to put pressure on Assad to ensure that the armed forces withdraw from towns and villages, the tanks are taken out of circulation and the ferocious massacres perpetrated by the security forces are put to an end”.

In his discussions with the Arab League Ambassadors, Terzi declared that “pessimism” on a positive outcome for the Annan Plan “is widespread” amongst Arab interlocutors and that the Plan “will not continue indefinitely.[…] Let’s wait another couple of weeks”, he added, “to see if this is a path that can produce rapid results, or if something different is needed”. Terzi specified that this pessimism “has not yet translated into a decision to say that we should turn the page on the Annan Plan. It continues to unfold in a climate of great concern, of violation of the ceasefire by the Syrian armed forces and security forces, as Annan himself has said”, concluded Terzi.

The meeting between Terzi and the Arab League Ambassadors also included discussions of issues such as the Middle East peace process, the Sudanese crisis, the Iranian nuclear question and the Sahel. Such meetings will be held regularly, as part of a structured cooperation agreement established 4 years ago by Italy and the Arab League.

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