Statement by Minister Terzi at the Friends of the Syrian People Conference (Istanbul, 1 April 2012)

2012-04-02

(please check against actual speech delivered)

Time is running out, both for the Syrian people, who have been suffering for too many months, and for our collective credibility. In Italy's view the end of violence is the absolute priority, along with granting full and unhindered humanitarian access.Italy is ready to give its contribution under UN coordination. My country is making available 3 million euros.To achieve the goal of a peaceful, democratic and free Syria, the Annan's Plan is the way forward. Italy fully supports it. But it is not an open-ended commitment.Two key conditions are needed, in view of a solution which ends the Syrian citizens'suffering and meets their legitimate aspirations.First, Assad must match words and deeds, with the immediate cessation of violence, granting full humanitarian access, withdrawing his armies from cities. The time for delay is over. Pressure on the Assad regime, as long as these conditions are not fully complied with, will be constantly increased. Italy stands ready to support the adoption of further EU sanctions. Second, a Syrian-led political transition must begin swiftly. Italy commends the efforts of the Syrian National Council as legitimate representative and leading interlocutor for the opposition: the Istanbul Covenant is a crucial step, on which to build upon. A united, inclusive and representative opposition is a guarantee for the democratic future of Syria and for the success of the political transition.The alternative to a peaceful solution is a prolonged civil war. This would have catastrophic consequences for the Syrian people and for the region due to possible spill-overs.We need to show our full political support and solidarity to neighbouring Countries and stand ready to work with them in order to address challenges stemming from the Syrian crisis, as Italy has already done for Syrian citizens in Lebanon.

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