**Intervento introduttivo del Ministro Terzi alla XVI sessione del Foro del Mediterraneo (versione originale)**

Roma 20 Febbraio 2012

*(fa fede solo il testo effettivamente pronunciato)*

I am delighted to open and chair the 16th session of the Mediterranean Forum. We felt a strong need for the FOROMED to meet. Indeed, our last meeting took place in Algiers in 2008, when the discussion focused on the birth of the UpM. After the Arab Spring and the central role the Mediterranean has regained in the European agenda, we need to revitalise this **informal forum**, which also enjoys the participation of Egypt, Turkey and Greece. It is an ideal brainstorming opportunity, one that I would like to see us exploit to fullest effect by engaging in a free and open discussion.

Before opening our talks, I would like to highlight an innovative aspect of our meeting: the presence of the **Arab League**. A presence that confirms the growing role played by this organisation in the regional context.

The Mediterranean is once again bathed in the spotlights of the international stage, after years when globalisation mainly concerned the regions of the Pacific, Latin America and Africa. Today, we are acting in a regional framework that is undergoing rapid transformations that require **concrete and immediate responses**.

I would ask you, therefore, to focus in our reflections on the **priority objectives** posed by the transitions taking place, and on the **financial instruments** available to us to achieve them. I hope that part of the discussion will be devoted to the challenges of consolidating the region’s **security framework**.

**Goals and financial instruments**

As I see it, our **priority goal** is to respond to the need for the transition countries to achieve democratic and economic consolidation. A goal that is shared by both shores of the Mediterranean. The level of stability and prosperity of the northern shore depends on that of the southern shore. It is the result of our close interdependence: we are connected and interconnected by intense historical and geographical bonds, as well as by political, economic and social ties.

In several countries of the southern Mediterranean we have seen orderly, free and transparent elections. Others are embarking on the electoral process in a spirit of renewed pride. We are gladdened by these developments. We cannot, however, delude ourselves into believing that there are shortcuts to democracy. Democracy is a system that must be built slowly and comprehensively, by tackling the snares and transitions that lie in wait and pose risks and potential perils.

Without wishing to hand down a lesson, but in the light of our own experience, we think that in this critical period we should aim to foster employment and social inclusion, to damp down the sources of resentment and to support reconciliation. These tasks cannot be imposed from the outside. They are the tasks solely and exclusively of the Arab countries. But we Europeans can help, as indeed we ourselves were helped when we rebuilt our continent from the moral and material ruins of the Second World War.

So we must ask ourselves if the financial and development cooperation instruments at our disposal are sufficient. We fully intend, naturally, to keep the promises we made with the Deauville Partnership. Italy will do everything in its power to ensure that there are no failings in that respect. That would be unacceptable in both political and the moral terms. Today, our discussion could start with the European Neighbourhood Policy – on the possible strengthening of which we would be interested to hear Commissioner Fuhle’s thoughts – and then continue with participating countries’ observations and proposals on other instruments also.

These are difficult times. Not just in the regional context, but in view also of the serious global economic and financial crisis. The question, therefore, is how to increase the resources available to us and how to use them to best and most rapid effect. More specifically, the question is: how to deliver funds more quickly and maximise their impact. We most definitely cannot afford waste and inefficiency in any form.

Europe’s Mediterranean countries are ready to voice our southern partners’ needs in European and multilateral fora. But we expect the countries of the southern short to provide a political, legislative and regulatory environment that is favourable to inward investment and capable of absorbing funding. Note, however, that I am not using the word “conditionality” here. I have replaced it with the principle of on-going open dialogue by all parties concerned. In other words, as I said during my visits to Libya, Egypt and Tunisia, I want to reassure – and be reassured by – the new leaderships.

**Political and security dimension**

I would like to propose security as our second topic for discussion. I am referring here to the possibility of strengthening the Mediterranean dimension both within the framework of the European Union’s Security Strategy and through possible liaison and coordination with the institutions and regional organisations concerned: NATO, OSCE, Arab League. Italy has proposed that the EU Security Strategy be up-dated: the last review dates from 2008. A very different context and time from today’s.

However, we need to adopt a comprehensive approach. An approach that includes not just traditional security issues – such as maritime and energy security, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, combating terrorism – but also the “human dimension”.

The Arab Spring confirmed that it is dangerous to ignore peoples’ yearning for freedom and to delude ourselves that we can simply look the other way when faced with serious rights violations. Human rights have acquired an **operational dimension**. Promoting and defending them responds to our primary needs of security and political stability. Our goal must therefore be to place the issue of rights, starting with the rights of young people, women, and religious minorities, right at the centre of Euro-Mediterranean relations. One of the most effective ways to safeguard our security would be to include, in the transition countries’ new constitutions, the principles of moderation recognised by international conventions governing human rights. And, indeed, by Islamic civilisation.