

**MED DIALOGUES CONFERENCE
ROME, 10-12 DECEMBER 2015
TRANSCRIPTION OF THE CONCLUDING ADDRESS BY THE HON. MINISTER**

Dear President Napolitano, Dear Colleagues and Authorities

First of all, I would like to thank – as President Aragona has already done – all those who have participated in our MED Dialogues: Government Authorities, entrepreneurs, representatives of NGOs and think tanks, journalists and everybody who has followed our proceedings in these days. I would especially like to thank my collaborators, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, from its Cabinet Department and from my Staff. I'd also like to thank the ISPI Institute for having organised the running of this event. My gratitude to President Aragona and to Paolo Magri, who has been a tireless organiser. And finally, my thanks to all our forces of Law and Order, who during these three days of work, have helped us and contributed to the running and the security of this event.

After these three days, we are aware of a concept which was especially important for me when imagining this Conference: precisely in moments of acute crisis, despite what is currently happening, every now and again one must find the time to try to look further ahead and to think beyond the crisis. We have seen this here, during these three days, and we will see it again during tomorrow's conference on Libya.

Despite the fact that pressing current events obviously compel us, quite rightly, to deal with them, we must also create opportunities to think about the future and to outline some aspects of future issues. This is particularly so for Mediterranean issues, for that "Global Mediterranean" which has been at the centre of our Conference.

A Mediterranean which reaches to the Gulf of Aden, a Mediterranean which includes Africa, a Mediterranean which is a crossroads between three continents: Asia, Europe and Africa.

I think that here, more than anywhere else, the threat posed by the terrorism of Daesh is at its most evident.

We know perfectly well that fundamentalist terrorism is a long-term menace which has existed for over a quarter of a century, but we also realise that Daesh has various characteristics and that these must be understood in all their particular dangerousness.

I believe that two lessons should be very clear for us as Italians, and as Europeans.

The first is that we must not repeat the mistakes of the past. We have been reminded many times during our discussions here, for example, that the second

intervention in Iraq played an extremely important role in the birth and development of Daesh, due to the breakdown of Iraq's institutional structures.

The second lesson might seem in contradiction with the first, but I don't see it that way: we mustn't over-indulge and allow ourselves to be paralysed by some kind of sense of guilt. Recognising past errors does not mean that we should lose conviction in our ideas, in our values and above all in the role which we have and which we must play in this region. If the West is absent, or Italy is absent, that won't help the Mediterranean, the peace process, dialogue or negotiations. I often repeat that what the Romans called *Mare Nostrum* must not become *Mare Nullius*, i.e. a sea that belongs to no one, that no one takes care of, where no one tries to construct dialogue, peace or relationships. Therefore we shouldn't repeat past mistakes but neither should we allow ourselves to feel guilty. Yesterday's errors must not justify today's reluctance.

Our reaction to this threat must first and foremost focus on one very simple goal: the radical and definitive defeat of Daesh and of terrorism. Such a defeat must inevitably derive, in the first place, from commitment of a military nature. We in Italy are totally aware of the importance of this, because we have been involved at military level since the birth of the anti-Daesh coalition. This is true in a decisive way in one key country concerned in this challenge, namely Iraq, but also in various other key nations involved across the whole arch of a crisis which stretches from West Africa to Pakistan. Our presence is decisive in Somalia as it is in Afghanistan, in Lebanon as in Kosovo, four of the vital theatres where the challenge of terrorism is being confronted.

And precisely because of our commitment, we can say that over the coming weeks and months we will be called upon to react to a new need which has recently emerged: to do our best to coordinate the different international efforts against terrorism, particularly with regard to Russia. Russia's intervention [in Syria] has certainly produced various contradictions, but it remains an intervention which we need to take into account and which – in my opinion – should be coordinated with the anti-Daesh coalition.

As well as the military dimension, there is an equally important political dimension. I don't take part in the game of arguing about whether the political or the military dimension is the more important, because they go together, as our colleagues from Arab and African countries here today know all too well. At the moment, the underlying challenge is being played out in a new way, in terms of the resilience of certain countries which are under acute pressure from the threat of terrorism and from the connection between terrorism and migratory phenomena.

In these three days we have heard the deeply important words of the King of Jordan, we have listened to the Tunisian Prime Minister and to members of the Lebanese Government, to mention just three of the countries whose resilience is

currently sorely pressed by the threat of terrorism, migratory pressure and regional instability.

If we were to carry out military operations without implementing at the same time political strategies aimed at sustaining regional stability, our action would be limited and, once again, would aim for short-term results without considering long-term perspectives.

And in looking to the future – as the King of Jordan and Premier Renzi reminded us during this Conference’s inaugural session – we have to consider the cultural dimension, which for us Italians and Mediterraneans means a combination of education, culture, training and defending our cultural heritage. This is why it is important that the bilateral agreement signed yesterday with Minister Lavrov includes a joint commitment between Italy and Russia regarding the defence of the cultural heritage of areas at risk. Even more important to keep in mind is the dimension of inter-faith and inter-religious dialogue, of religious pluralism, and the risk that in certain areas of the Mediterranean important historical religious presences are now being threatened and indeed destroyed. I’m thinking of the Christians in the plains of Nineveh, but also of many other situations of problematic co-habitation in a region where the Jewish, Christian and Muslim worlds all have their roots.

In other words, if we wish to seriously confront the challenge of terrorism, we must have the strength to combine military, political and cultural dimensions.

Naturally, as well as defeating terrorism, in tackling the crises which seem to have their epicentre in the Mediterranean area and solving the problems facing us, diplomacy has to play a fundamental role.

Diplomacy has recently demonstrated its many weapons and I believe that we must stubbornly insist on backing diplomacy and its role. I say this to my Foreign Minister colleagues present here, and with the greatest conviction. Especially in confronting the crises facing us, including the Middle East peace process which – as we saw yesterday in the speeches of the Israeli and Palestinian negotiators – is currently in a situation of alarming stalemate. The international community must try to restart this process, because the idea that such a long-term conflict has now become marginal is a dangerous illusion.

If this historical conflict were to become caught up in a religious war between the State of Israel and a fundamentalist version of Islam, we would find ourselves facing even greater dangers than those we currently face. On this issue we must send a wake-up call to the entire International Community, calling for a serious effort to timetable innovative contributions to resolving the crisis between Israel and Palestine.

As for Syria, the process begun in Vienna has demonstrated that it is possible to at least open a window of opportunity. The window opened looks in a direction which I believe is the necessary one and which our nation has backed with a certain

coherence – forgive me if I underline this – over the last 2 or 3 years: the idea that one must aim for the removal of the dictator Bashar Al Assad from the stage, but avoiding at all costs the creation of a void which would inevitably be replaced by terrorism and new forms of destabilization.

What was needed was to kick-start a negotiation process, and perhaps an opening in this direction has been achieved. The developments seen in recent days from conversations in both Riyadh and Amman are steps in the right direction. If the conditions are right, during the upcoming encounter in New York we can entrust Staffan De Mistura and the United Nations with the task of setting up negotiations between the regime and the forces fighting it on political and military levels. Simultaneously with the beginning of these negotiations, we should implement a ceasefire, which will naturally not concern terrorist organisations but which would finally be, if you like, – also from the humanitarian viewpoint, which we often mention too infrequently – good news: a breath of oxygen in terms of perhaps the most dramatic of all the crises we are facing.

Diplomacy is called upon to achieve another exercise in window-opening – or perhaps something more, I would hope – concerning the situation in Libya, in the ministerial summit taking place here in Rome tomorrow.

In the case of Libya I'm convinced that the challenge could be summed up like this: we have to demonstrate that the actions of governments, of diplomacy and of the international community are capable of being quicker and more effective than the threat of terrorism.

The threat of terrorism exists, close to us all. We may disagree in our analysis of its greater or lesser extension, but it is undoubtedly close to our nations, present in the heart of the Mediterranean. We cannot permit this threat to grow, but we must commit ourselves above all to the fact that we can halt it through a negotiated political solution, achieved by the Libyans. This is the commitment of tomorrow's conference: not to impose anything on anybody, but to create the conditions – via an understanding between all the international and regional players who have a relevant influence on the Libyan crisis – which will permit the existing embryo of agreement between the different Libyan factions to broaden and be consolidated and finally lead to an agreed national government. The reaction of the International Community would then be immediate, on the part of the UN and the EU, to support the new government in a stabilising process which would finally bring security to a Country which has all the potential and all the resources to play a leading role in Mediterranean development.

The message from our Conference, from MED, is that while we act against the challenge of terrorism, while we manage the crisis I have just mentioned, while we deal with the migratory phenomena which in Europe are causing major political crises but which in some Countries in the region represent an even deeper threat to stability, while we deal with all this, we can and must also look to the future. Our

objective is to discuss ideas, to consider the seeds of a new Mediterranean order. We are all aware that we have to aim for a new order, that we have to think about a new order.

Here is our 'homework', for preparing the next MED edition.

First and foremost we have to find a way to rebuild even a minimum degree of trust between different States in the Region. Minimum rules for trust, given that in recent months inter-religious conflicts and terrorist threats have placed in doubt the very existence of some States in the Region. And so we find ourselves facing a situation which Michael Waltzer has described as a mixture between post-sovereign realities and hyper-sovereign realities. We simultaneously have certain subjects which transcend national sovereignties but also certain States which are extremely forcefully asserting their individual roles, their subjective viewpoints, their sovereignties. This is no bad thing in itself, but it sometimes leads to conflicts with neighbours and with other States in the Region. This is why rebuilding a minimum degree of trust between States is one of the possible and necessary seeds of a new Regional Order.

The second element of our 'homework' is, I believe, to multiply economic and commercial relationships within the Region, and not only in previously explored directions. Exchanges between European countries are prolific, and those between Europe and North Africa are substantial, as they are between the EU and the Balkan countries. But perhaps we should all work to intensify trade within regional areas as well: the West Balkans, North Africa, the whole of Africa. To put it simply, we need these economic and commercial links which are indispensable if we wish to achieve greater cooperation within regional areas, and this is another possible basis for a future Mediterranean Order.

The thing is, as Europeans we're hardly in a position to give lessons to anyone at present, because we're experiencing one of the most difficult periods for our Union. Just think how the EU is reacting to the migration crisis. Nevertheless, the example of the European Union is undoubtedly of enormous interest as a region at the centre of internal conflicts which in the course of a few decades became an absolutely extraordinary unit of economic, commercial and social relationships. I am under no illusions about this being an easily reproducible model on the opposite shore of the Mediterranean, but I am convinced that the growth of economic and trade links between different Mediterranean areas is another possible basis for a new future regional Order.

A third aspect of our 'homework': I think we have to back multilateralism. I refer of course to emergency-orientated multilateralism, of the kind which will take place tomorrow on Libya or which took place in Vienna on Syria. There is no longer a single "hot line" between two or three people to sort out the world's problems. This is why it is our job to involve all subjects which can contribute to finding solutions for global crises.

This emergency-orientated multilateralism needs to work alongside the multilateralism of Regional Organisations like the EU, the African Union, the Union for the Mediterranean, the Gulf Cooperation Council or the Arab League. Naturally, I'm talking about organisms of different kinds, different functions, different missions, but their relationships must go beyond mere coexistence. The collaboration between these organisms – some of them more active than others – is without a doubt another possible aspect of the new order which we should be trying to imagine.

And finally, I believe that beyond emergency-orientated multilateralism we also need a stable multilateralism covering the Global Mediterranean area. Once upon a time one would have called it a Mediterranean Concert. This could be one of the subjects to be explored in preparation for the MED Conference next year.

To conclude, I would like to focus for a moment on one last thought. We have examined three main issues: the fight against terrorism, the handling of crises and the embryos of a new Regional Order. As a fourth issue we should remember the 'Positive Agenda for the Mediterranean' which is mentioned in the title of this Conference.

On a political level, and on a public opinion level, it is fundamental that the enlarged Mediterranean is seen in its real dimensions. Not just as a place featuring disorder, potential risks or threats, but as a place of extraordinary positive opportunities. The Mediterranean is already that, today. It is in reality and it also should be – and governments must exert themselves to this end – in the eyes of public opinion. It is fundamental, not least for peace within our different societies, that we are capable of recognising our neighbours for what they are: potential collaborators in our wellbeing, in our future, in our development.

This is absolutely evident in the case of Africa. We know that Africa faces a challenge between now and 2030, but this is a challenge which can be overcome. The IMF forecasts Africa's growth rates over the next five years as fluctuating between 5 and 5.5%. This is obviously an average that currently includes various countries which unfortunately find themselves in desperate conditions. The growth opportunity reflects extraordinary potential in terms of electrification, infrastructural networks, rural development and women's empowerment.

Just think too of the opportunities which will derive from the doubling of the Suez Canal. We have discussed this during our three days here. It's a very simple matter: the redoubling of the canal will mean that the number of container ships passing through the canal every day can rise from 49 to 97. This will have potential consequences on the Italian economy too, on Italy as a Mediterranean logistical hub. And think also of the connection between this scenario and China's investments in the new Silk Route.

Then there is the issue of energy. We have discussed this at length. Yesterday saw a fascinating dialogue between the DG of AIEA and the CEO of ENI: a clear

lesson in how a positive company which invests in development can also contribute to political stability, here through the idea of an East Mediterranean energy hub involving Egypt, Israel and Cyprus and which is projected towards Africa. Also interesting are the projects of another major Italian company, ENEL, for the electrification of Africa. Then again, there is the power line which will connect Italy with Tunisia, a project which is of great importance to us.

And finally, in this Positive Agenda we also have to consider our collective resources. The simple fact is that the Mediterranean contains 400 international UNESCO Heritage sites, an incredible concentration, 236 protected marine areas, and 1/3 of the world's tourism, despite the threats and the situation of massive tension. This is the heritage that we hold in our hands.

When we talk about a positive agenda we're not talking about wishful thinking. For a start, there is the reality of our economic collaboration, but there is also an extraordinary potential which exists between us and our brothers in North Africa and the whole continent of Africa, and the Western Balkan countries, and the entire Global Mediterranean Region. In this Region the future of the Italian economy is at stake, and of the European economy.

Dear Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me conclude my address. I am extremely pleased that during these three days in Rome we have really felt ourselves at the centre of a debate on the Mediterranean. Our discussions have been by no means listless or stilted. Every now and again we Foreign Ministers find ourselves in meetings where everyone just reads out their speeches, and where it is unlikely that interesting suggestions, ideas or provocations will emerge.

That has not been the situation here. We have seen that – perhaps also thanks to our traditions, our cultures and our differences – we can have rich and fruitful discussions, full of fresh ideas. So let us work together on the goal of making our Mediterranean increasingly less a risk and increasingly more an extraordinary opportunity for Italy, for Europe, and for all of us. Thank you all and “arriverderci” at MED 2016.