



Ministero degli Affari Esteri

ITALY

STATEMENT

BY H.E. FRANCO FRATTINI

MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

SIXTEENTH SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

High Level Segment

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Human Rights Council – 16th Session
Address by H.E. Franco Frattini, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy

Mr. President,
Mme High Commissioner,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor for me to be here today, at the opening of the sixteenth session of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

This session of the Council provides us with a good opportunity to address the most urgent and critical human rights issues and to strengthen the capacity of the Council to tackle them.

Protection and promotion of human rights are indeed one of Italy's foreign policy priorities, stemming from the assumption that the respect for fundamental freedoms is crucial in guaranteeing peace, preventing conflicts and fostering the growth of stable and democratic societies worldwide.

Our engagement in the field of the protection of human rights has developed in a number of different ways during the past years and our commitment was reflected in our membership in this Council between 2007 and 2010, which we hope to renew in the next coming term 2011-2014.

We have focused our action on a number of specific priorities, among which I would like to recall the issue of the death penalty, freedom of religion or belief, women's rights.

In light of recent developments, we are increasingly concerned at the rise in acts of intolerance and violence against religious communities around the world.

Violence against women is a grave widespread violation of human rights. In particular, we attach the greatest importance to the international campaign against Female Genital Mutilation.

On all these issues we will pursue our action with determination both at the bilateral and multilateral levels.

Mr. President,

Over the past few days and weeks, we have witnessed a situation of instability and impetuous change affecting a number of Countries in North Africa and in the Middle East.

All of them have clear human rights obligations, stemming from international legal instruments and are subject to international scrutiny, including the Universal Periodic Review carried out by this Council. But today more than ever, we have the duty to help assure in those countries the best possible balance between the need for stability and the full protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Let me express our deep concern for the situation in Libya. Despite our request to open a dialogue with the protesters, Col. Kadhafi has turned himself against his people in the attempt to regain at all costs the control over the Country. We firmly condemn the Libyan regime's attitude.

The criminal acts perpetrated by Kadhafi should be sanctioned by the international community and he can no longer be considered a legitimate interlocutor.

Giving concrete signals of political solidarity to the Libyan people is morally imperative. The international community must have a strong coordination in order to effectively tackle the Libyan crisis. Italy is ready to support all the decisions that will be taken in the framework of the EU and the UN, including restrictive measures against the Libyan regime.

We welcome the decision by the Human Rights Council last Friday to urgently dispatch an independent, international commission of inquiry to investigate into all violations of international human rights law in Libya and to recommend the General Assembly to consider the suspension of the rights of Libyan membership in the Council and to organize an interactive dialogue on the human rights situation in Libya during the 17th Session of the Council.

We also welcome the united and strong position taken by the Security Council through the adoption of Resolution 1970. The measures adopted are justified by the need to put an immediate end to violence, ensure the protection of civilians, promote respect for international law and hold those responsible accountable. The referral of the matter to the International Criminal Court might ensure that those responsible for the crimes are brought to justice.

We are convinced that it is of the utmost importance to stop violence and start an open, inclusive, national Libyan-led dialogue. We are committed to facilitate this dialogue in the future. We are deeply concerned by the humanitarian aspects of the crisis and by the risk of uncontrolled flows of migrants across the Mediterranean following a vacuum of power in the Country or the continuation of gross and

systematic human rights violations by the regime. Should the Libyan authorities fail to ensure the protection of their people, the international community should be ready to assume its “responsibility to protect”.

In the EU framework, Italy is promoting a “package” of assistance. In the current situation the principle leading our action – that we trust will be shared by the whole membership – shall be to make a distinction between the Libyan leadership on one side, and the country and its people on the other. With this in mind, we urge the Libyan authorities to keep up to their responsibility to protect the population and to facilitate the departure of those foreign citizens wishing to leave the country. For our part, we stand ready to provide the Libyan population with all the humanitarian aid it might need and to this end we have already offered the use of our military base in Sigonella.

In a broader perspective, the crisis in Libya could have a strong impact on Tunisia and Egypt both in political and socio-economical terms. Migrants and refugees are crossing the border of Tunisia and Egypt to escape the violence. A massive flow of migrants will probably be unsustainable for the economy of those countries.

This is why it is essential to launch a New Pact for the Mediterranean and overcome the limitations linked to the current cooperation instruments. A Pact based on the principles of co-ownership, stability, political responsibility and strong economic and political support. An ambitious initiative, built on a new model of development, integration and the free movement of people, capital and goods.

The EU has to do its part in dealing with its Southern neighbours, leading the international efforts in supporting the transition processes towards democracy. We are called to provide meaningful European support to regional stability. Such an objective can be attained by marginalizing the forces that are attempting to hold back the reform process or creating chaos.

But stability cannot be achieved without giving immediate and tangible answers in terms of socio-economic development. Therefore it is crucial to identify flexible strategies of action modulated on the basis of the different reality of each Country of the region, in terms of social and economic development, political institutions, historical and cultural heritage.

In conclusion, while reaffirming our firm condemnation of the ongoing unacceptable violence against civilians and massive human rights violations in Libya, we firmly believe we should work closely together, in a common effort of cooperation and mutual understanding.

Thank you.