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Starting again from the Mediterrean: a horizon for international policy

Rimini, August 24th 2015 – "The Mediterranean is the story of a love that seems deadly and dramatic – a special area of human life, of history, of comparison, and of conflict and war at time". So Roberto Fontolan, director of the International Center of Communion and Liberation, introduced the conference, held in the Hall B3 Intesa Sanpaolo, which intended to bring attention to the serious issues, but also on the extraordinary potential of this unique area of the world, in order to identify possible ways of political action. "Over the past quarter-century it seemed that tragic events – from the Balkan War to the recent Isis' terrorist attacks - could transform the Mediterranean into a dark enigma where horror tries to kill that love. But those of us who feel part of the family do not want to give up the Mediterranean: for us, that love is irresistible. And the Meeting particularly, for it always glorifies the beauty of the relationship between the men of this world, says that we faint not in this vocation, we do not let this promise unfinished".

In this horizon it is fundamental the role of Tunisia, the first country to experience the Arab Spring, now led by a democratic government that seeks to bring the country to a rebirth – opposed by the merciless blows of terrorism. It is Foreign Minister Taieb Baccouche, first speaker of the conference, which proposed the creation of a "Mediterranean policy, which has as its goal the establishment of a solid partnership and a joint development to establish peace and prosperity on the two shores of the Sea": Tunisia and Italy, two countries with very ancient histories, have to be the main players. The African country is living a crucial moment in its history: "Its people" said Baccouche "has raised for its freedom and dignity. The transition from authoritarian systems to freedom and democracy is still possible at the beginning of the third millennium. It is required. It is promising. But it is threatened by coward terrorist attacks and it therefore need to be accompanied by lucidity and solidarity".

The desire for democracy and freedom rediscovered by the countries of the southern Mediterranean – said the minister – must be protected through international action to win the specter of a clash of civilizations that threatens the twenty-first century. "To the terrorists who want to put against men, cultures and religions, we must oppose another reality (political, moral, and cultural) and another will – that of respect, exchange and dialogue". So the Mediterranean, instead of the scene of war which seems likely, will again become "the place where everyone will accept the face and voice of the difference".

To the battle of the Tunisian people, he expressed sympathy and admiration the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Italian Paolo Gentiloni. Sharing the idea of the centrality of a Mediterranean future, the minister has condemned those who insist on untying the contemporary political action by the 'Mare Nostrum': "To fear external threats is to ignore that the crisis is internal to our borders and assumes deeply ambiguous traits in our society, politics and demographics." To achieve the goal proposed by the Tunisian Minister – to avoid the clash of religions and civilizations through dialogue and peace, defending both the Muslim and the Christian communities in the Middle East – Gentiloni has proposed to work on three major issues. "The first" he said, "is security and the fight against terrorism. The West has probed, especially in the last twenty years, the limits of military intervention without a future, which almost generated a reluctance towards Mediterranean affairs. We have to defend, however, the Mediterranean pluralism; and, to that effect, it is necessary the Christian presence, which must be protected". Second objective is to solve the dramatic problem of migration, which, according to Gentiloni, must be understood first of all in its origins and cannot be examined only in institutional workshops: "It must therefore be dealt with on two lines, a European – in an effort to find a shared policy – and Italian – in a fight against dealers of fears and illusions". Finally, the third requirement is to understand that a Mediterranean collaboration can offer unique opportunities for development and jobs in all countries.

To conclusion for the conference, Fontolan invited two speakers to take stock of the situation on the fears and hopes of their countries in the face of the international crisis, and express the highlights of its commitment as Minister of Foreign Affairs. Baccouche underlined the disillusionment experienced by young Tunisians, who, after struggling for the realization of their dreams of freedom, now live the contrast between the achieved democracy and the failure to achieve socio-economic goals: "They fall then in the grip of the terrorists, who offer them easy money and convince them of the worst contradictions – that terrorism is in the name of God. If Tunisia wants to exit this impasse we need a shared political support, which aims to solve the more general problems of Middle East countries through negotiations and compromise". Commenting on the papal statement about the dangers of "a third world war in pieces", Gentiloni stressed that Italy must feel fully involved in the challenges that the complex geopolitical situation offers, playing a leading role in the mediation: "I dream that Italy was the country of dialogue, that would give structure to a new scheme of multilateralism that guarantees dialogue and security. "

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