

## Italy's Special Envoy to Libya: "Italy is concerned, but committed to help"

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By Sami Zaptia.

Speaking exclusively to Libya Herald at the Italian embassy in Tripoli yesterday, Italy's Special Envoy to Libya and current ambassador, Giuseppe Buccino said that "The significance of appointing a Special Envoy to Libya is an indication that Italy is concerned by the current situation in Libya".

However, he went on to stress that "it is also an indication that we are committed to helping Libya. Therefore a Special Envoy for Libya, in cooperation with UNSMIL, is useful". The appointment of an Italian Special Envoy to Libya mirrors steps taken by Libya's main allies the UK, France and the US. However, unlike Libya's other main allies, Italy did not appoint a separate person to act as Libya's Special Envoy, but chose to appoint its existing ambassador in Tripoli. "We already have strong relations with Libya – we did not need to appoint a dedicated Special Envoy", explained the man with two jobs. "A Special Envoy has more powers than an ambassador", he continued.

With regards to his exact tasks as Special Envoy, Buccino said that the "first task of the Special Envoy is to coordinate with UNSMIL. Duplication or multiplication of efforts does not help", he stressed. "My mandate is to strengthen relations with Tariq Mitri and UNSMIL", Buccino continued. The three main areas of coordination are the legislative elections of 25 June as a way to resolve the domestic Libyan political process".

"Secondly we commend and support the progress and work of the Constitutional Assembly that has been achieved up to this point. And thirdly Italy's commitment to UNSMIL's efforts to foster a Libyan national dialogue".

"We can build on the Rome Conference commitments", Buccino explained, "but we need a government to work with and a clear division of powers between the Libyan government and the legislature". Underlining the importance of Libya to Italy, the ambassador and Special Envoy said that "Libya is a priority of Italian foreign policy. The issue of illegal and legal immigration from Libya is paramount. In 2014 over 40,000 migrants have been rescued already as part of the Italian Mare Nostrum humanitarian operation".

"This is a ten-fold increase on 2013. There are ten patrol boats in the process of being delivered to the Libyan coast, seven financed by Italy and three by the EU. "We understand that the conditions within Libya may not be right at this time, but we do ask

Libya to take more action. Less than 10 percent of migrants getting to Italy are stopped by Libyan authorities", Buccino pointed out. With regards to local Libyan matters and the existence of two Libyan Prime Ministers and governments, the Italian Ambassador and Special Envoy to Libya would only say that "Like the EU and US I have met with both caretaker Prime Minister Thinni and Prime Minister Maetig".

However, seasoned observers have noted that it is significant that none of the EU states have sent the customary congratulatory message to new Prime Minister Ahmed Maetig.