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Forum in Sicily reaffirms Libyan-Italian economic cooperation

By Hadi Fornaji.



Ahmed Maetig and Italian foreign minister Angelino Alfano sign an economic cooperation agreement by the ancient Greek Temple of Concord in Agrigento (Photo: Italian foreign ministry)

Tunis, 8 July 2017:

Economic collaboration between Italy and Libya was reaffirmed today in the Sicilian town of Agrigento with a joint statement to that effect signed by Presidency Council deputy Ahmed Maetig and Italian foreign minister Angelino Alfano. It came during of the first Italo-Libyan Economic Forum, which was held in the town.

The statement envisages that Italian companies will be involved in Libyan infrastructural reconstruction, including rebuilding airports. They will also resume suspended joint projects including the construction of the coast road originally agreed by Qaddafi and former Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi.

The forum drew more than 100 Italian businesses, institutions and investors keen to assess the opportunities in Libya once security is re-established.

Organised by the Italian foreign ministry, it focussed on four prime areas of potential partnership: energy, infrastructure, communications networks and financial institutions. Communications was of particular importance. The forum was held in Sicily because the Italians hope to develop the island as a Mediterranean hub for the internet, with new cables being laid to Libya and elsewhere.

"Historically Libya has always been an important partner for Italy, from the economic point of view as well as from the political and security standpoint," said Alfano. Once Libya was stabilised, the Italian government wanted to focus on economic, infrastructure and energy cooperation," he added.

Among those present on the Libya side was Wisam Al-Masri, chairman of Libya Wings, one of whose planes flew Maetig and the Libyan delegation from Tripoli to Catania. Libyan Wings has been pushing to be able to fly direct from Tripoli to Rome and Milan.

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