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CHRONOLOGY OF ITALIAN FOREIGN POLICY

January-December 2009

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- 2-9 G8:** in view of the coming G8 meetings under the Italian presidency, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi starts consultations with the leaders of various countries.
- 7 Gaza:** Walter Veltroni, secretary of the Democratic Party (Partito Democratico, Pd), the main opposition party, states that it is important to talk with all parties involved in the conflict in Gaza, including Hamas. This is the same stance taken by the former Foreign Minister of the Prodi II government, Massimo D'Alema. Furthermore, Veltroni harshly criticizes the Italian government's stance on the crisis.
- 12 Energy:** at the extraordinary EU Council meeting on energy problems, Minister for Economic Development Claudio Scajola declares that Italy is willing to host a meeting with Russia, Ukraine and the other parties involved in the gas dispute.
- Gaza:** the Arab ambassadors in Rome send former Foreign Minister of the Prodi II government, Massimo D'Alema a letter in which they praise his position on the conflict in Gaza and his criticism of the government's pro-Israeli stance.
- 13 Energy:** Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi states that he agrees with Russia's position on the gas dispute with Ukraine.
- 14 Battisti affair/Brazil:** the Italian government is surprised and outraged by the decision of Brazilian Minister of Justice, Tarso Genro, not to extradite Cesare Battisti, condemned in Italy to four life sentences for terrorist acts at the beginning of the Eighties. Battisti has been granted asylum on the grounds that he could be persecuted for his political ideas; doubts have also been raised about the conduct of his trial. Battisti, arrested in Brazil in 2007, is awaiting sentencing by the Court of Brazil. The Brazilian ambassador to Italy is summoned by the Foreign Ministry.
- 15 Energy:** Paolo Scaroni, CEO of Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi (ENI), Italy's largest energy company, flies to Moscow to put forward a proposal for solving the Russia-Ukraine dispute over gas supply and prices. The proposal involves a consortium of European companies in the gas sector paying, in advance, for the gas required to fill the pipeline that crosses Ukraine – now empty – as well as the gas that the Ukrainian pumping stations will consume.
- Human rights:** Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, declares that the human rights situation in Italy is uncivil and a disgrace. In particular, as concerns immigration, Italy, according to Hammarberg, "is approving discriminatory laws that do not respect human rights", above all the right to asylum. Foreign Minister Franco Frattini tasks Italy's permanent representative to the Council of Europe with expressing Italy's indignation and protest for these declarations.
- Gaza:** Foreign Minister Franco Frattini receives a delegation of ambassadors of Arab League countries accredited in Rome, to whom he outlines the Italian government's action with respect to the crisis in Gaza and Italy's bilateral and G8 commitments towards the Palestinian population.
- 16 EU/Competition:** the Italian government asks European Trade Commissioner, Catherine Ashton, to take measures against the tariffs put on certain European products by the United States.

- 17 Battisti affair/Brazil:** in a letter sent to Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President Giorgio Napolitano expresses his surprise and regret for the Brazilian government's refusal to extradite Cesare Battisti.
- 18 Gaza:** during the Sharm El Sheik summit on the conflict in Gaza, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi states that Italy is ready to dispatch a Carabinieri contingent to control border openings, collaborate on sea patrol, and provide humanitarian aid and assistance to the wounded. Other proposals include a Marshall Plan for Palestine, Israel's entry into the EU and having the Sicilian town of Erice host a peace conference.
- 27 Battisti affair/Brazil:** out of protest against the refusal to extradite Cesare Battisti, Foreign Minister Franco Frattini recalls the Italian ambassador to Brazil.
- Tunisia/Immigration:** during a visit to Tunis, Interior Minister Roberto Maroni discusses the question of the repatriation of illegal immigrants of Tunisian origin with Tunisian President Ben Ali. They reach an agreement for the repatriation within two months of the immigrants present in the identification and expulsion centre on the Sicilian island of Lampedusa.
- 28 Economic crisis:** the International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicts a two-year recession in Italy, given the Italian government's scarce room for manoeuvre due to the high public debt. The IMF therefore urges Italy to launch a reform programme.
- EU/Infrastructure:** the Italian ambassador to the EU protests against the lack of transparency in the EU's granting of contracts in the field of infrastructure.
- 29 Battisti affair/Brazil/EU:** in reply to the request of the Minister for European Policies Andrea Ronchi to intervene in the Cesare Battisti affair, European Justice Commissioner, Jacques Barrot, states that he has no competence in the matter. The diplomatic tension between Brazil and Italy continues to rise.
- Economic crisis:** during the World Economic Forum in Davos, Economy and Finance Minister Giulio Tremonti suggests that the EU issue *Union bonds* to finance projects of European importance and emphasizes the need for new regulations for the banking and financial systems.
- 30 Battisti affair/Brazil:** Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi affirms that the Cesare Battisti affair must not damage bilateral relations with Brazil.
- United Kingdom:** British workers in UK refineries strike to protest against the decision to subcontract the work to foreign – particularly Italian and Portuguese – companies and workers.
- 31 Immigration:** Laura Boldrini, spokesperson for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), criticizes Italy's inability to deal adequately with the problems of immigration and asylum.

February

- 2 United Kingdom:** Johannes Laitenberger, spokesman of the President of the European Commission, claims that the strikes in UK against Italian workers are unjustified. Minister of Labour Maurizio Sacconi warns that European Community rules on the free circulation of workers must be guaranteed. British Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, Peter Mandelson, telephones the Undersecretary for Economic Development, Adolfo Urso, to reassure him that the Italian workers will be protected.
- 3 Libya:** Italian Senate votes in favour of the Treaty of Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation

between Italy and Libya signed in Bengasi on August 30 2008. The treaty was approved by the Italian Chamber of Deputies on 21 January.

- 4 **EU/Competition/France:** Minister for European Policies Andrea Ronchi expresses the Italian government's concerns about the anti-crisis measures taken by the French government to European Commissioner for Competition, Neelie Kroes, underlining that competition rules have to be the same for all EU countries.

G8: Foreign Minister Franco Frattini describes the main programmatic lines of the Italian G8 presidency, listing the priorities: reform of international institutions, development in Africa and other emerging countries, the fight against terrorism and climate change.

- 5 **Libya/Immigration:** Interior Minister Roberto Maroni signs an agreement in Tripoli on joint patrolling of the Libyan coastline to counter illegal immigration.

UN/Security Council: an international meeting, chaired by Foreign Minister Franco Frattini, is held in Rome to discuss reform of the UN Security Council. The 76 countries attending, with almost 40 sending ministers or undersecretaries, represent the different geographic areas and member categories of the United Nations.

- 6 **United States:** Ronald Spogli, US ambassador to Italy during the Bush administration, ends his term polemically, criticizing the current situation in Italy. Spogli laments the lack of reform in the economic sector and the educational system, and the absence of links between the academic world and the productive system, urging Italy to prepare a plan for energy security.

- 7 **EU/Competition/France:** Minister for Economic Development Claudio Scajola reiterates that the subsidies to the automobile industry agreed upon by the French government are in violation of community regulations on state aid.

- 9 **Angola:** during Foreign Minister Franco Frattini's visit to Angola, Eni and the Angolan oil company Sonangol sign three agreements.

- 9-13 **Africa:** Foreign Minister Franco Frattini visits Angola, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Senegal. He confirms Italy's commitment in the G8 to promote more African participation in the management of global problems. Frattini invites Senegal and Nigeria to the G8 summit in July.

- 10 **China/Tibet:** mayor of Rome Gianni Alemanno confers honorary citizenship on the Dalai Lama. The spokesman of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, Jiang Yu, states that this action offends the Chinese people, constitutes interference in internal Chinese affairs and could have repercussions on relations between Italy and China.

Zimbabwe: Foreign Minister Franco Frattini hints that Italy may be willing to support the lifting of punitive measures taken by the EU against Robert Mugabe's dictatorial regime.

- 11 **United States/Afghanistan:** Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi promises to make a greater Italian commitment in Afghanistan, if requested by the US.

- 15-18 **United States:** Nancy Pelosi, speaker of the US Congress, visits Italy, where she meets President Giorgio Napolitano, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, Foreign Minister Franco Frattini and the speaker of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, Gianfranco Fini. At the center of their discussions are the questions of Guantanamo and Afghanistan.

- 16 **United States/Finmeccanica:** the new US administration declares that it is going to cancel the contract for the construction of a new presidential helicopter (*Marine One*), which former US President George Bush, granted a consortium that included Finmeccanica, the main Italian defence company.

Russia: in a meeting with Russia's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Alexei Kudrin, Foreign Minister Franco Frattini reiterates that Italy fully supports Russia's rapid entry into the WTO and the OECD.

- 18 Afghanistan:** during a visit to Herat and Kabul, Foreign Minister Franco Frattini announces Italy's intention to send more soldiers, as requested by the Obama administration, and to promote the involvement of Iran in the process of stabilizing Afghanistan.

Missions abroad: Senate turns Decree law no. 209 of 2008 (bill no. 1334) into law, extending Italy's participation in international missions.

- 20 EU/Competition:** EU Commissioner for Competition Neelie Kroes expresses her concern that the plan for support to the Italian automobile industry passed by the Italian government could violate EU rules on non-discrimination and free circulation of goods.

- 23 Romania/Immigration:** in a meeting with his Rumanian counterpart, Cristian Diaconescu, Foreign Minister Franco Frattini asks the government in Bucharest to collaborate more in controlling the flow of immigrants.

- 26-27 United States:** during a visit to Washington, Foreign Minister Franco Frattini meets various exponents of the US administration, including Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Discussion revolves around G8 priorities and how to strengthen cooperation between Italy and the United States on some priority issues on the international agenda, such as Afghanistan, Iran, the situation in the Middle East, relations with Russia and the Balkans. Frattini confirms Italy's intention to invite representatives of the Iranian government to the G8 meeting on Afghanistan and Pakistan scheduled for June 25-27. Frattini also confirms his intention to visit Tehran.

March

- 1 Russia:** meeting in Bari between President Giorgio Napolitano and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. They discuss various international issues, such as the economic crisis, the G8-G20 and inter-religious dialogue.

- 5 UN/Racism:** the government announces the withdrawal of the Italian delegation from the negotiations underway in the framework of the United Nations conference on racism and xenophobia (Durban II), to be held in Geneva on 20-24 April, protesting against what it considers the anti-Semitic tones contained in the draft of the conference's final document. The choice is criticized (on March 6) by France, which claims that European countries have to reach a common European position on the issue.

Iran: Foreign Minister Franco Frattini postpones his visit to Iran announced on February 27. The visit, approved by the United States administration, was supposed to take place within the month of March and was meant to involve Iran in solving the Afghan and Pakistani questions. It would have been the first visit of a European foreign minister since Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad took office in 2005. The postponement is caused by Iranian declarations against Israel (defining it a cancer, for whose foundation the Holocaust was used as a pretext), which Italy defines as unacceptable, and Tehran's intention to summon a conference on Gaza with exactly the opposite aims of those of the Sharm El Sheik summit on March 2.

Croatia: Foreign Minister Franco Frattini meets with the Prime Minister of the Croatian Republic, Ivo Sanader, with the objective, among other things, of relaunching negotiations for Croatia's entry into the EU, currently blocked by the Slovenian veto.

- 13-14 Economic crisis:** during a meeting of G20 finance ministers at South Lodge (United Kingdom), Economy and Finance Minister Giulio Tremonti proposes European surveillance of the banking system.
- 16 UN/Racism:** Italy declares that it is ready to reconsider its decision to withdraw its delegation from the negotiations of the United Nations conference Durban II if a new text proposed by the Netherlands is accepted.
- 19 Immigration:** the report by the committee of experts of the International Labour Organization (ILO) accuses Italy of discrimination and violation of fundamental human rights in its treatment of immigrants. Foreign Minister Franco Frattini replies, emphasizing that “expressions like ‘intolerance’ or ‘discrimination’ with respect to immigrants are used with respect to Italy and Italian authorities in an unacceptable way”.
- 29-31 G8:** a meeting of the G8 ministers of labour is held in Rome. Italy proposes a global social pact founded on social sustainability as the fundamental component of economic stability at both the national and global level.
- 31 Afghanistan:** the UN International Conference on Afghanistan is held at the Hague. Italy reiterates that a ‘regional approach’ involving nearby countries like Pakistan and Iran is needed to stabilize Afghanistan. Foreign Minister Franco Frattini meets with Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran, Mohammad Mehdi Akhuzadeh.

April

- 3-4 NATO:** Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and Foreign Minister Franco Frattini participate in the extraordinary NATO summit in Strasbourg/Kehl. At the summit, Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen is nominated Secretary General of NATO (to succeed Jaap de Hoop Scheffer on August 1), overcoming Turkish reservations. Berlusconi takes credit for having persuaded Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to approve the nomination. Instead, Erdoğan and Turkish President Abdullah Gül declare that they decided to withdraw their veto on Rasmussen's nomination after having met US President Barack Obama.
- 5 EU:** during the EU-United States summit in Prague, Italy presents an eight-point ‘road map’ to accelerate Euro-Atlantic integration in the western Balkans.
- 6 United States:** US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates recommends cancelling the program for development of a new presidential Vh-71 helicopter (*Marine One*), in which Finmeccanica is involved, because the costs have become prohibitive.
- 6-7 Russia:** during an Italian high-level mission to Moscow, in which Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi also takes part, Italy and Russia sign agreements on civil aviation and energy.
- 11 Piracy:** the highseas tugboat *Buccaneer*, with ten Italian crew members, is hijacked by pirates in the Gulf of Aden. The Italian frigate *Maestrale* is detached from the EU Atalanta mission and brought under national control in order to be able to follow the *Buccaneer*.
- 18-20 G8:** a meeting of G8 ministers of agriculture, held in Cison di Valmarino near Treviso, produces a final declaration that puts food security and hunger in the world at the top of its agenda.
- 19 Immigration:** Italian government agrees to take in the immigrants aboard the ship *Pinar*, blocked in international waters since April 16, after having been refused entry by Malta. This decision eases the tension created between Malta and Italy in the preceding days after the Maltese government

refused to take them in. Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi states that he has been reassured by the EU that the question of rules for sea rescue of immigrants will be dealt with in the near future. On April 17, Laura Boldrini, spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), had asked Italy and Malta to consider the humanitarian aspect of the matter and duly to rescue the persons at sea.

20 UN/Security Council: Italy puts forward a proposal for reform of the UN Security Council that calls for: more representativeness, above all for African states, through the addition of non-permanent seats with a term of more than two years; more efficiency, by limiting use of the veto; and the prospect of a European seat.

20-24 UN/Racism: Italy do not attend to the United Nations conference on racism and xenophobia (Durban II). In the days leading up to the conference, the EU is unable to find a common position and attends the conference divided.

23 G8: with a surprise move, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi decides to hold the G8 summit in L'Aquila, the capital of the Abruzzo region, rather than on the Sardinian island of La Maddalena, as previously planned. The declared intention is to contribute to the relaunching of the area hit by an earthquake on April 6.

Immigration: Foreign Minister Franco Frattini meets the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), António Guterres. The latter expresses his appreciation for Italy's efforts in carrying out sea rescue operations and highlights the need, also frequently underlined by Italy, to work out in a multilateral forum a system of common rules based on burden-sharing. The objective of the meeting is to overcome the differences between the UNHCR and Italy that arose in the preceding weeks over Italy's policy towards immigrants.

26-28 Belarus: Belarus' President Alexander Lukashenko visits Italy. His meetings with Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and Foreign Minister Franco Frattini break the country's diplomatic isolation imposed as a result of serious human rights violations. This is Lukashenko's first visit to a Western country since 1995, the year he came to power.

27 EU/Immigration: in a meeting with EU foreign ministers, Foreign Minister Franco Frattini puts forward a seven-point plan to fight illegal immigration. In particular, Italy asks the EU for a common framework for dealing with migratory flows in the Mediterranean.

May

4 Immigration: Italy accuses Malta of having left it with the burden of rescuing the immigrants on board the *Pinar* in an area that is of Maltese responsibility, forcing it, among other things, to shoulder considerable expenses. Italy appeals to the EU, asking for further financing to deal with the problem of illegal immigration.

4-5 Israel: during a European tour, Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman meets with Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and Foreign Minister Franco Frattini. The latter invites Lieberman to engage in negotiations with the Palestinians.

6-10 Immigration: three ships with 231 persons on board are sighted off the coast of Sicilian island of Lampedusa. Rescued by Italy, the immigrants are sent back to Libya. Three days later, two rubber dinghies with 163 immigrants on board are intercepted in international waters off Lampedusa and conducted once again to the port of Tripoli. These episodes create tensions with Malta as the dispute continues as to whose responsibility it is to rescue illegal immigrants intercepted at sea. Italy's policy of sending the immigrants back to the port of departure is criticized by the opposition, the Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI) and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

- 7** **United States:** Foreign Minister Franco Frattini meets with various exponents of the Obama administration during a visit to Washington and attends a banquet in his honour offered by the American Jewish Committee.
- Middle East:** Following Israeli Foreign Minister Lieberman's request to Italy to help Israel improve its relations with Libya, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, Foreign Minister Franco Frattini proposes to United States special envoy to the Middle East George Mitchell that Italy play a mediating role between Libya and Israel.
- 12** **Egypt:** an Italy-Egypt intergovernmental summit is held to celebrate the first anniversary of the strategic partnership between the two countries. Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, as well as various Italian ministers and their Egyptian counterparts, sign 14 bilateral agreements between the two countries. Paolo Scaroni, CEO of Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi (ENI), signs a cooperation agreement with Egyptian Oil Minister Sameh Fahmi.
- UN:** the Italian government candidates Italy as the non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for the 2017-18 two-year period.
- Immigration:** in a letter to the Italian government, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) expresses his "serious preoccupation" for the return to Libya of the immigrants intercepted and rescued at sea. According to the UNHCR, Italy's policy does not allow for access to asylum in the EU and could lead to violation of the principle of non-rejection set down in the 1951 Convention on Refugees. Interior Minister Roberto Maroni states that checks for those asking for asylum can be carried out in Libya, where there is a UNHCR office. Italy's request to hold an extraordinary EU summit on immigration, in particular on the right to asylum, is rejected.
- 13-14** **North Africa:** Foreign Minister Franco Frattini visits Tunisia and Morocco. In Tunisia, he signs an agreement on immigration in which Italy declares that it is ready to increase the quota of Tunisian immigrants admitted to Italy and to give Tunisia €50 million to favour social development. Tunisia, on its part, commits itself to cooperating in identifying illegal immigrants. Frattini signs four bilateral agreements with Morocco on economic and cultural cooperation.
- 14** **Abu Omar case/United States:** presumed CIA agent, Sabrina de Sousa, accused of being involved in the abduction of imam Abu Omar in Milan in 2003, presents evidence of her innocence and requests diplomatic immunity. Her lawyer accuses the Italian legal system of violating international law and agreements protecting the diplomatic corps.
- 15** **Immigration:** Interior Minister Roberto Maroni meets Laurens Jolles, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) official responsible for the Mediterranean, to set up a refugee commission in Libya. The UN representative asks Maroni to put a stop to the policy of rejecting migrants in international waters, but Maroni says no.
- Libya:** the first joint patrols with Libya to counter illegal immigration start.
- Russia:** alongside a meeting in Sochi between Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and Russian President Vladimir Putin, Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi (ENI) and Gazprom sign an agreement to build the South Stream pipeline.
- 20** **Abu Omar case/ United States:** Milanese judge Oscar Magi turns down the request to revoke the order of arrest for 26 US CIA agents. The orders have not been carried out because neither the Prodi government nor the current government has started the extradition procedures requested by the Public Prosecutor's Office.
- Iran:** Foreign Minister Franco Frattini cancels his planned visit to Iran because the conditions imposed by the Iranians (meeting with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in Semnan,

instead of Teheran) are considered unacceptable. According to some sources, the other European ministers were not informed of the planned visit.

22 Guantanamo: the United States asks Italy to take in two Tunisian prisoners coming from the prison in Guantanamo. Foreign Minister Franco Frattini states that Italy will examine the question in a "positive spirit", but taking account of European positions on the matter.

25 Iran: during a meeting with foreign press representatives, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad declares that "relations with Italy are good" and adds, referring to the cancellation of Foreign Minister Franco Frattini's planned visit on May 20, that he knows that "certain European countries are under pressure from other countries". Frattini curtly denies these statements.

27 Foreign press: various foreign newspapers criticise Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi for his style of government. In particular, *Financial Times* calls him "a danger, above all for Italy, and a negative example for all". In reaction to these critiques, Niccolò Ghedini, MP for the People of Freedom party (Popolo della libertà, Pdl) and Berlusconi's lawyer, denounces "a close tie between certain Italian newspapers and certain foreign newspapers that are trying to delegitimize Berlusconi and are rendering a disservice to the country and to Italy's image". Foreign Minister Franco Frattini speaks of "bad press that practices journalism dishonestly".

Iran: Foreign Minister Franco Frattini states that he will go to Iran after the Iranian presidential elections on June 12.

Afghanistan: Minister of Defence Ignazio La Russa announces that Italy will participate in a NATO mission to train Afghan police forces.

Immigration: Amnesty International presents its annual 2009 report in which it criticizes, among other things, Italy's immigration and repulsion policy.

30 Germany/Opel: after long negotiations, Germany decides to sell Opel to Magna rather than Fiat. In response to accusations from the opposition that it kept a low profile during the negotiations, the Italian government responds that it did what it could.

31 Brazil: new Brazilian ambassador to Italy, José Viegas Filho, has been waiting for two months for accreditation with the President of the Republic, without which he cannot carry out his functions. The Cesare Battisti affair continues to create tension between Brazil and Italy.

June

1 Lebanon: Italy takes command of the maritime task force of the UN mission in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for a period of 3 months. Italy has 2,694 units participating in the mission, deployed in the area as of October 2006 on request of the Lebanese government, and Gen. Claudio Graziano has commanded the mission since February 2007.

4-5 EU: the EU Justice and Home Affairs Council only partially takes up Italy's requests concerning immigration. For persons asking for political asylum, the Council agrees to launch a pilot project to let member states take in, on a voluntary basis, some refugees that have reached Malta.

6-7 European elections: in the European Parliament elections, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's People of Freedom party (Popolo della libertà, Pdl) maintains its majority by an ample margin.

8 Bulgaria: the trilateral Italy-Bulgaria-Serbia meeting in Sofia is another step in the Italian initiative to favour the Balkans' entry into the EU.

9-10 Somalia: the Foreign Ministry hosts the meeting of the International Contact Group on Somalia that

is trying to set up a peace process in the country. Foreign Minister Franco Frattini promises to reopen the Italian embassy in Mogadiscio, to provide €3 million and to evaluate the possibility of training Somali police and coast guard personnel.

- 10-13 Libya:** during his visit to Rome, Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi holds a number of speeches in the Italian Senate, at the University of Rome “La Sapienza” and before the Rome municipal administration. Foreign Minister Franco Frattini distances himself from Gaddafi’s harsh declarations towards the United States.
- 11 Libya:** four tax-free zones will be established in Libya for Italian companies in view of an agreement on solar energy.
- Immigration:** the Italian government has an audition before the conference of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), after being accused of discrimination towards migrant workers in violation of ILO Convention 143. Italy is requested to provide clarifications concerning the legislation on security and the agreement with Libya presented by the government.
- 11-12 G8:** a G8 development ministers meeting in Rome focuses on the impact of the economic crisis on developing countries and, in the second place, on proposals for intersectoral and integrated approach to sustainable development. One, an organization that works in favour of poor countries claims in its report that Italy has respected only 3% of the commitments it took on at the 2005 Gleneagles G8 meeting.
- 12-13 G8:** during a meeting of the G8 ministers of the economy at Lecce, they approve the ‘Lecce Framework’, a set of principles and rules that are meant to guarantee transparency, integrity and correctness in the international financial system.
- 15 United States:** Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi meets with US President Barack Obama in Washington. Berlusconi promises to send another 500 troops, two Tornado aircraft, three helicopters and Carabinieri to train Afghan forces. Italy is also willing to take in three Tunisian former inmates of Guantanamo, who are to be imprisoned as soon as they arrive in Italy as they are under enquiry, even if there are still some points to clarify. Italy’s mediation on the Iranian dossier will be continued, but only if coordinated with the allies, above all the United States. They also discuss the US government’s decision to suspend the Vh-71 helicopter programme, in which Finmeccanica was supposed to participate.
- 17 Adriatic region:** Italy takes over the presidency of the Iniziativa Adriatico-Ionica (IAI). The IAI deals with tourism, culture and inter-university cooperation, the environment, SMEs, and internationalization.
- 18 European Parliament:** at a European People’s Party (EPP) summit in Brussels, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi promotes Mario Mauro’s candidature for the position of president of the European Parliament, putting emphasis on the Pdl’s results in the EP elections, but the Pole Jerzy Buzek wins out.
- 18-19 EU:** at the European Council, Italy proposes that the EU work out a common approach to the immigration problem, in particular that it enter into an agreement with Libya to control its coasts. It also proposes a common surveillance system to deal with the economic crisis and measures to protect employment. Italy asks the EU to come to the Aquila summit with a common position on climate, as a starting point from which to work towards an agreement with the other international partners.
- 19 Energy:** Gazprom shows interest in the proposal put forward by Paolo Scaroni, CEO of Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi (ENI), to set up an international oil agency to stabilise crude oil prices.

- 21** **G8/Iran:** Italy confirms its invitation to Iran to participate in the G8 conference on Afghanistan and Pakistan on June 25-27.
- 22** **G8/Iran:** Foreign Minister Franco Frattini declares that he considers Iran to have turned down the invitation to participate in the G8 conference in Trieste. He adds that Iran “showed no interest in explaining to the world whether it wants to be constructive, at least in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. [...] I believed in the possibility of involving Iran seriously, but the facts at hand, the deaths in the streets, the violence have forced me to change my mind”.
- 23-24** **Israel:** during the visit to Rome of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi declares that Italy is willing “to continue these relations [between Italy and Iran] only if they are considered positive internationally and with the explicit participation of the US administration”. He adds that “all past situations of our diplomatic relations with Iran have always been agreed upon with the US administration and Israel”. Berlusconi also supports Netanyahu’s proposal to create a demilitarised Palestinian state, defining it a “necessary prospect”, but asks that the construction of settlements be stopped. The two heads of government decide to hold bilateral meetings once a year.
- 25-27** **G8:** the meeting of the G8 foreign ministers held in Trieste sets out a strategy to stabilise Afghanistan.
- Iran:** Iran blames Italy for its decision not to participate in the G8 meeting in Trieste, claiming that “Rome did not behave according to agreements”.
- 26** **Economic crisis:** Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi criticizes the international organizations that spread negative growth forecasts, claiming that they undermine consumers’ confidence.
- 27** **NATO:** a ministerial level meeting of the NATO-Russia Council is held in Corfù, the first since the crisis in Georgia in August 2008. Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi is the only head of government present at the meeting.
- 29** **G8:** Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi presents the G8 Summit in L’Aquila. The Italian prime minister asserts, among other things, that Italy plays an important role on the international scene, citing the cases of Georgia and the role he played in bringing the United States and Russia closer together again. The Italian government, he adds, “is the most stable and secure in the entire West”.
- 30** **Immigration:** Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies Gianfranco Fini states that he finds “immoral” the policy of sending immigrants back to the country of departure without a preventive check for asylum seekers.

July

- 1** **Croatia:** Foreign Minister Franco Frattini states that the territorial dispute between Slovenia and Croatia should not slow down the latter’s process of adhesion to the European Union.
- Missions abroad:** presenting a joint report of the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Defence on Italy’s participation in international operations between July 1 and December 31 2008, Foreign Minister Franco Frattini points out that Italy contributes to various degrees in five UN missions, in most ESDP missions, in three NATO missions and in 18 OSCE missions.
- Iran:** reporting on the meeting of the G8 Foreign Ministers meeting in Trieste to a joint session of the Foreign Affairs Committees of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, Foreign Minister Franco Frattini asserts the need to maintain an open dialogue with Iran on the nuclear file, putting aside the idea of harsher sanctions for the moment. He also hopes for a common European policy towards visas for Iranian citizens.

- 7** **Romania:** visiting Bucharest, Foreign Minister Franco Frattini states that he is in favour of economic cooperation between Italy and Romania and declares that the two countries are working together to promote an EU summit on the Balkans in 2010.
- 8-10** **G8:** the G8 meeting takes place in Aquila. On the first day, the leaders of the eight countries meet; the next day they are joined by the leaders of Brazil, China, India, Mexico, South Africa and Egypt (G14). On the third day, there are meetings with representatives from various African countries and other states to discuss important issues for Africa and food security in general.
- 15** **UN/Abortion:** The Italian government states that it will support a UN resolution condemning the use of abortion as an instrument for birth control.
- Somalia:** the motion for initiatives to support reconciliation in Somalia passes in the Chamber of Deputies.
- 16** **UN:** in a speech to the Italian Fulbright Association, Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs Enzo Scotti states that the Security Council has to be made more representative and democratic, able to deal with current challenges. In agreement with the Uniting for Consensus group, of which Italy is a leader, Scotti emphasizes that it would be a mistake to add new permanent members.
- 17** **Human rights/Immigration:** The European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg sentences Italy to pay moral damages (for inhuman and degrading treatment) to a Bosnian citizen detained in Rebibbia prison in Rome from November 2002 to April 2003 in overcrowded conditions.
- 21** **Austria:** Foreign Minister Franco Frattini affirms that Italy will keep Austria informed of developments in its nuclear programme, above all with regard to safety and preventive measures. Frattini and Austrian Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger agree on the need to unblock Croatia's accession process and to further the integration of the Balkans into the EU.
- 22** **Libya:** Ansaldo Sts (Finmeccanica group) is awarded a commission worth €541 million for provision of a signaling and telecommunications system for Libya's coastal and inland railways. The contract is part of the agreements pertaining to the Italian-Libyan treaty signed in 2008. Finmeccanica is already present on the Libyan market with the Liatec (Libyan-Italian Advanced Technology Company) joint venture; Libya promises to give the contract for the electronic control system for Libya's Saharan borders to Selex Sistemi Integrati, another Finmeccanica company.
- 23** **Serbia:** an agreement is signed in Belgrade by which the Italian government contributes €30 million to Serbian small and medium-sized enterprise and local public service enterprise. Italy had already supported Serbian enterprise with €33.5 million in loans.
- 25-26** **Afghanistan:** after a number of clashes involving Italian troops, Minister for Reforms Umberto Bossi declares that he would withdraw Italian troops from Afghanistan. The government denies that this is planned.
- 27** **EU:** in the European Council, Foreign Minister Franco Frattini supports Albania's candidature for entry into the European Union.
- Afghanistan:** Foreign Minister Franco Frattini dines with the US representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke, reassuring him of Italy's commitment in Afghanistan after the doubts raised by Minister for Reforms Umberto Bossi's statement.
- 30** **Missions abroad:** the Foreign and Defence Commissions of the Italian Senate unanimously approve the refinancing of the Italian missions abroad until the end of October. Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi declares that an exit strategy from Afghanistan will only be taken into consideration after

the presidential elections in Afghanistan and in agreement with allies.

August

- 3** **NATO:** NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen appoints the Italian ambassador in London, Giancarlo Aragona, to the group of experts charged with the preparatory work for the drafting of the alliance's new strategic concept.

Somalia: Foreign Minister Franco Frattini reconfirms Italy's support to the first prime minister of the transitional Somali government, Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke. The Somalian prime minister promises to resolve the Buccaneer affair involving a ship taken captive by pirates on April 11 which has some Italian crew members aboard.

- 5** **UN/Child soldiers:** the Security Council passes resolution 1882 on children and armed conflict supported by Italy.

Iran: Italy, like the other European states, does not offer the traditional diplomatic congratulations for Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's inauguration out of protest for the violence perpetrated against the demonstrators who were challenging the legitimacy of his re-election.

- 6-7** **Energy:** Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi participates in a meeting between Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, during which they sign two agreements on the South Stream gas pipeline and the Samsun-Ceyhan oil pipeline. ENI will participate in both projects.

- 9** **Piracy:** The Italian sailors held hostage on the tugboat, *Buccaneer*, taken captive off the Somali coast on 11 April are freed. Foreign Minister Franco Frattini denies having paid the pirates \$4 million. The crew is not authorised to speak. Minister of Defence Ignazio La Russa does not rule out that the Somali government paid the ransom and adds that Italian military were ready to intervene if the negotiations did not conclude positively.

- 10** **Guantanamo:** Italy agrees to take in three Tunisian prisoners from Guantanamo who have trials pending in Italy. Justice Minister Angelino Alfano and his counterpart Eric Holder agree to sign the formal document setting out details after August 15.

- 11** **Burma:** Foreign Minister Franco Frattini is harshly critical of the sentence condemning Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the democratic opposition of Burma, to 18 months of house arrest.

Missions abroad: Foreign Minister Franco Frattini suggests that the Constitution be changed to include an explicit reference to Italy's possible participation in peace operations.

- 12** **Environment:** on the basis of a report put out by the Kyoto Protocol Management Committee, Italy may have to pay €840 million to purchase carbon emission rights if it wants to respect the commitments it took through the European Union. Italy agreed to a emissions threshold below its real requirements and will have to turn to the international emissions market to stay within its limits.

Panama: the *Unido por el Canal* consortium, of which Impregilo is a member, signs an agreement with the Panama Canal authority to build a system of locks as part of the project to expand the canal. That the consortium had won the relative contract was announced on July 15.

- 15** **Afghanistan:** a kamikaze attack on the NATO headquarters in Kabul leaves 7 dead and 91 wounded, among whom an Italian member of the ISAF contingent.

EU/Immigration: Justice Minister Angelino Alfano speaks out against the EU's immigration and prison policies. Alfano states that the EU has to "either apply the treaty for the return of prisoners to

their countries of origin or give us the money to build new penitentiaries”, emphasizing that many prisoners are foreigners. He criticizes the EU because, while it comments on the treatment of prisoners, it overlooks the problems of immigration.

- 17 Energy:** the US administration states that it is perplexed by the ENI-Gazprom joint venture for the construction of the South Stream pipeline, considered a rival of Nabucco, the pipeline promoted by the EU that is supposed to bring Caspian gas to Europe without having to pass through Russia. Italy denies accusations of contributing to increasing the EU's energy dependency on Russia, pointing out that it purchases energy resources from Algeria, Libya, Qatar and Azerbaijan in addition to Russia.
- 18 Immigration:** according to a study carried out by the Banca d'Italia, the increase in the number of immigrants in Italy has not had the effect of creating “less opportunities for Italians which, on the contrary, seem to have increased for the more educated Italians and women”. The Bank states that the migratory flows have contributed to mitigating the progressive ageing of the Italian population.
- 20 Afghanistan:** Foreign Minister Franco Frattini states that he is satisfied with the way the presidential elections in Afghanistan were run and declares that “it is a matter of national pride that there was a high turnout and that few polling booths remained closed in the areas under our military contingent's control”.
- Immigration/Malta:** a new dispute erupts between Italy and Malta after a group of Eritreans, rescued at sea by Italian authorities, declare that they were intercepted and left at sea by the Maltese coast guard.
- 22 Immigration/Malta:** Maltese Foreign Minister Tonio Borg denies Italy's accusations that it abandoned immigrants to their fate and turns down Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini's proposal to reduce the extent of the waters for which Malta is responsible.
- 23 Immigration/EU:** Foreign Minister Franco Frattini repeats Italy's request that “refugees be distributed to all 27 EU member countries on the basis of certain criteria”. The European Commission announces that a proposal for a plan by which refugees are distributed to member countries on a voluntary basis and for the finances required to manage landing emergencies will be presented on September 2. Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt (holder of the EU presidency) ensures that the Commission's proposal will be evaluated by the General Affairs and Foreign Relations Council at the end of October.
- 25 Energy:** Minister for Economic Development Claudio Scajola announces that an agreement will soon be signed with the United States for the production of last generation nuclear energy. The agreement follows upon another that ENEL signed with France's EDF.
- 26 Immigration/EU:** Justice Minister Angelino Alfano speaks out again against the EU on the problem of the overcrowding in Italian prisons, repeating the requests he directed at the EU on August 15. The EU responds that it does not lie within its competence to intervene in the daily management of the member states' judicial systems.
- 27 Immigration/Malta:** the controversy between Italy and Malta continues over the five Eritreans saved by Italian authorities on August 20. Italy accuses Malta of not rescuing the men and insinuates that the Maltese government wants to boycott the Italy-Libya agreement.
- Piracy:** Foreign Minister Franco Frattini, Undersecretary of Defence Giuseppe Cossiga, representatives of Confitarma (the Italian confederation of shipowners and the president of the “Company Security Officer” working group meet in Rome to discuss the measures needed to fight piracy. One of the proposals is to set up a permanent desk at the Foreign Ministry's crisis unit.

- 29** **Immigration:** a rubber dinghy with 75 immigrants aboard is turned back to Libya. Laura Boldrini, the spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), criticizes the operation, claiming that the policy of refoulement harms their right to asylum.
- 30** **Libya:** Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi visits Tripoli on the anniversary of the Treaty between Italy and Libya. In response to the polemics that preceded the visit, Foreign Minister Franco Frattini describes the visit as “necessary in order to consolidate links between Italy and Africa”, claiming that the agreements signed with Libya have proven fundamental for checking immigration.
- 31** **Antisemitism:** Foreign Minister Franco Frattini asks his Swedish counterpart, Carl Bildt, that a resolution condemning antisemitism be approved at the informal EU foreign ministers meeting scheduled for September 4-5 so as to lessen the tension between Sweden and Israel after the Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet published an article accusing the Israeli army of being involved in the trafficking of human organs taken from Palestinian corpses.

Immigration/EU: the EU asks Italy and Malta for clarification regarding the practice of refoulement of migrants on the high seas. The EU believes that the migrants are not allowed to exercise their right to asylum. Interior Minister Roberto Maroni declares that the policy of turning back immigrants will continue.

September

- 1-3** **EU:** from Danzig, where he is taking part in the commemorations for the 70th anniversary of the beginning of the second world war, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi announces that “we will not vote any more, blocking the functioning of the European Council, until European commissioners and their spokespersons are no longer allowed to voice their opinions publicly. Only the president of the Commission and his or her spokesperson should be allowed to speak. I will ask for all commissioners or their spokespersons who continue to do what they have been doing all these years to be definitively fired.” The Commission replies underlining its collegial character and independence and defending the right of all its members to express their opinions publicly.
- 2** **Immigration:** Foreign Minister Franco Frattini welcomes the European Commission’s plan to provide technical assistance and additional funds to member countries willing to take in refugees who intend to request asylum. Frattini believes that this is a first step towards an obligatory distribution of refugees among the 27 EU member countries.
- 3** **Unicredit:** Foreign Minister Franco Frattini and Unicredit CEO Alessandro Profumo sign a letter of intent for a permanent structured cooperation between Italian embassies and the Unicredit group. In Frattini’s opinion, this agreement will benefit Italy in that it will strengthen its economic diplomacy.
- 9-10** **G8/Violence against women:** the international conference on violence against women organized by the Italian G8 presidency is held in Rome. Foreign Minister Franco Frattini appeals to the UN to ban genital mutilation.
- 10** **Battisti affair/Brazil:** the Brazilian Supreme Court postpones its judgement concerning extradition of the former terrorist Cesare Battisti, convicted for murder in Italy.
- 11** **Immigration/EU:** Italy responds to the European Commission’s request for clarification regarding its immigration policy. The Italian government claims its refoulement policy “conforms to Community law and existing international conventions, in particular the protection of persons requesting asylum or international protection”.
- 13-16** **South Korea:** President Giorgio Napolitano pay state visit to South Korea, accompanied by Foreign Minister Franco Frattini. It is the first state visit to South Korea by an Italian head of state.

Napolitano and President Lee Myung-bak hold a summit on September 14 and discuss ways to promote bilateral economic cooperation and collaboration within the G8 and G20 frameworks. Frattini assured his colleague Yu Myung-hwan that Italy will work in the G8 context to combat nuclear proliferation of North Korea and discuss a common strategy on UN reforms. Napolitano and Frattini open the new Italian Embassy headquarters in Seoul.

- 14 Immigration/human rights:** UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanethem Pillay criticises the refoulement policy and the treatment of the Rom. In a note, the Foreign Ministry replies that the accusations are not addressed at Italy and defends the government's policy.
- 15 Afghanistan/EU:** during the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council, Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs Alfredo Mantica proposes that an international conference be held in Kabul after the new government is inaugurated.
- 16-19 Japan:** President of the Republic Giorgio Napolitano visits Japan and speaks to the Assembly of the Italy-Japan Business Group. On that occasion, a framework agreement in the aerospace, security and electronics sectors is signed between Finmeccanica and the NEC Corporation. Deputy Minister for Economic Development Adolfo Urso states that cooperation with Japan will tend to concentrate increasingly on technological sectors rather than the traditional products made in Italy.
- 17 Afghanistan:** six Italian soldiers are killed and four wounded in a suicide attack in Kabul. Minister for Reforms Umberto Bossi once again demands the withdrawal of Italian troops. The government does not seem to intend to withdraw, unless an exit strategy is agreed with all allies. Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi states from Brussels that "there will be a transition strategy and a reduction in personnel – 500 soldiers will return home". The spokesperson of the Foreign Ministry Maurizio Massari states that 200 Carabinieri will be sent to Herat to contribute to the training of the Afghan police force.
- Somalia:** During a meeting with Somali Foreign Minister Ali Ahmed Jama "Jengeli", Foreign Minister Franco Frattini promises to provide €1.5 million to strengthen certain Somali ministries and to train police personnel and repeats that Italy intends to open an Italian embassy in Mogadishu.
- 18 Missions abroad:** the government speaks of bringing home approximately 2000 soldiers deployed in Lebanon and Kosovo, as well as the 500 soldiers sent to Afghanistan for the presidential elections.
- 20 Afghanistan:** Defence Minister Ignazio La Russa points out that the funding for international missions has increased, while the defence budget has undergone numerous cuts in recent years. He also promises to withdraw Italian soldiers from Kosovo and Lebanon.
- 21 Immigration:** following the Justice and Home Affairs Council, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Antonio Guterres appeals to Italy to stop sending migrants back to Libya since the latter does not offer refugees guarantees.
- 22-24 UN:** in New York for the opening of the session of the UN General Assembly, Foreign Minister Franco Frattini takes part in a meeting of the United for Consensus group, in which he repeats that Italy is in favour of an enlargement of the Security Council that would make it more representative and inclusive, but is against the addition of new permanent seats.
- EU/Climate:** the European Commission turns down Italy's request to review the ceilings on CO2 emissions.
- Iran:** Italy, along with other Western countries, condemns Iran for having concealed the existence of a centre for uranium enrichment, but hopes that Tehran will be willing to negotiate.

- 26** **Immigration/EU:** Interior Minister Roberto Maroni accuses the EU of having “done little” as far as immigration is concerned, having left management of immigration up to the member states, and of having been inactive in particular with respect to refugee policy.
- 27** **Iran:** Foreign Minister Franco Frattini asks Iran to suspend its missile test to show the international community that it is willing to cooperate on the nuclear question.
- 28-29** **Afghanistan:** at the margins of the informal meeting of EU defence ministers, Defence Undersecretary Giuseppe Cossiga states that reducing the coalition’s troops in Afghanistan is inconceivable in the next 3 to 5 years and that Italy will behave accordingly.
- 29** **EU:** Foreign Minister Franco Frattini denies press sources that state that he put forward the name of Mario Draghi, governor of the Banca d’Italia, as a candidate for the president of the Central European Bank. The normative and procedural framework for designating the next president will only be made known in a year’s time.
- 30** **Belarus:** Foreign Minister Franco Frattini visits Minsk to consolidate bilateral relations with Belarus in view of greater political dialogue and more cooperation in the humanitarian field.

October

- 1** **Iran:** Foreign Minister Franco Frattini states that he approves of the Iranian proposals for the nuclear dossier presented at Iran’s meeting with the group of 5+1 (five members of the UN Security Council plus Germany).
- 5-16** **Israel/NATO:** a joint exercise of the Italian and Israeli airforces takes place at the Decimomannu military base in Sardinia. The exercise was supposed to be carried out in Turkey as part of Turkey’s programme of training operations with NATO, but was cancelled by the Turkish government in protest against Israel’s military intervention in Gaza.
- 7** **Afghanistan:** Minister of Defence Ignazio La Russa confirms the return home from Afghanistan of the 500 Italian soldiers sent for the presidential elections in August. Chief of Staff Vincenzo Camporini calls for more sharing of intelligence and strategic assessments on the part of the US, UK, Australia and Canada.
- PNA:** Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and Foreign Minister Franco Frattini meet with the president of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), Mahmoud Abbas (known as Abu Mazen) in Rome and confirm Italy’s commitment towards establishing a Palestinian state. Berlusconi reassures Abu Mazen that Italy is putting pressure on Israel so that “the first step in order to negotiate is for them to stop their settlements”.
- 11** **Iran:** Foreign Minister Franco Frattini asks Iran to suspend capital punishments and promises to request at the next EU Council that the matter of human rights to be brought up during EU-Iran talks.
- 11-12** **Missile defence:** Defence Minister Ignazio La Russa ensures Italy’s total cooperation in implementing the Obama administration’s new anti-missile shield plan, meant to protect against threats coming from Iran.
- 13** **Immigration/EU:** Minister of Justice Angelino Alfano proposes that foreign prisoners sit out their sentences in their countries of origin and asks the EU to contribute to the building of prisons in member states with numerous foreign prisoners in their penitentiaries (see August 15 and 26). The European Commission answers that it is not competent to intervene and that no funds have been allocated to deal with this problem.

- 14** **EU/Council presidency:** Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi confirms his support for Tony Blair's candidature as President of the Council of the European Union.
- UN/Human rights:** the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanethem Pillay deplores the Italian parliament's blocking of the bill on homophobia.
- 15-19** **Afghanistan:** the government curtly denies that Italian secret services paid the Taleban in the Surobi and Herat areas during 2008 and that this was kept a secret from the French contingent which subsequently took its place, as stated in some articles of the British daily, The Times.
- 16** **UN/Gaza:** the UN Human Rights Council approves the Goldstone Report accusing Israel of having committed war crimes during the military intervention in Gaza. Italy votes against it, along with the United States and four other European countries.
- 19** **Iran:** Foreign Minister Franco Frattini expresses solidarity for the Iranian government after the suicide bombing attack in Baluchistan (southern Iran) which caused scores of deaths.
- Energy:** the Italian, Russian and Turkish governments sign a joint declaration in Milan for the construction of the Samsun-Ceyhan oil pipeline. Contemporaneously, ENI and the other companies involved in the project sign a Memorandum of Understanding.
- 20** **Afghanistan:** Foreign Minister Franco Frattini defines the Afghan president's decision to carry out a second ballot after reports of rigging of the August 20 presidential elections "an act of political maturity". He also confirms that the Italian contingent sent to patrol the voting stations during the first round will remain for the second round.
- 21** **Albania:** Foreign Minister Franco Frattini meets Albanian Foreign Minister Ilir Meta and declares Italy's "full commitment to supporting Albania's prospective entry into the European Union".
- EU/Environment:** the EU turns down Italy's request to reopen the negotiations on greenhouse gas emissions permits. Since Italy has reached its ceiling set down in the Kyoto Protocol, it will have to pay to be able to open new plants.
- Africa:** during a meeting with the president of the African Synod, Foreign Minister Franco Frattini announces that the EU is about to adopt an Italian proposal to set up a European agency for asylum and refugees.
- 21-23** **Russia:** Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi travels to Moscow for a "strictly private" meeting with Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. According to the Russian press agency, Putin and Berlusconi discussed energy cooperation and agreements concerning the automobile industry and agriculture.
- 23** **Immigration/EU/France:** in view of the meeting of the European Council on October 29-30, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and French President Nicolas Sarkozy send a letter to the EU President, Fredrik Reinfeldt, and the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, requesting a common European action on immigration.
- 26** **Immigration:** a Coast Guard patrol boat and a tugboat from an offshore platform rescue a boat with 300 immigrants on board that has been in the Sicilian Channel since October 23. The event rekindles the dispute between Malta and Italy over the rescue of migrants at sea.
- UN/ECOSOC:** the UN General Assembly elects 22 countries, including Italy, to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for the 2010-2012 three-year period.

- 29** **Lebanon:** Israel's presumed request to extend the mandate of Gen. Claudio Graziano as commander of the UN peace-keeping force in Lebanon (UNIFIL II) triggers protests from the Spanish government. Gen. Graziano is to be replaced by a Spanish officer on January 28 2010. Foreign Minister Franco Frattini assures Spain that the commitments taken on will be respected.
- 29-30** **EU/immigration:** at the end of the European Council meeting, Foreign Minister Franco Frattini states that he is satisfied since the Council has agreed to "all the issues on immigration brought up by Italy". The heads of state and government were in favour of strengthening the border agency (Frontex) and establishing an European asylum agency by the end of 2009. In the conclusions, the Council asks the Commission to test the feasibility of Frontex regularly renting aircraft for joint flights to return immigrants to their home countries in response to the request put forward by Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and French President Nicolas Sarkozy on October 23.
- 31** **Syria:** Minister for Economic Development Claudio Scajola takes part in the Italy-Syria Economic Forum in Damascus, during which trade agreements are signed, especially in the field of mechanics.

November

- 2** **Iraq:** ENI signs a preliminary agreement with the Iraqi oil minister to develop the oilfield near Zubair in southern Iraq. The licence was assigned to the consortium led by ENI and which includes the US Occidental Petroleum Corporation and the South Korean KoGas on October 13. The service contract allows ENI to operate the oilfield for 20 years, renewable for another five.
- 4** **Abu Omar case/United States:** 23 CIA agents are convicted for kidnapping the former imam Abu Omar in Milan on February 23 2003; at the same time, the former head of Sismi (one of the former branches of the Italian secret services, Nicolò Pollari, and Sismi official Marco Mancini cannot be tried because their acts are covered by state secret. The United States expresses its disapproval for the sentence. Human Rights Watch defines the sentence "courageous".
- 5** **G6:** At a meeting in London, interior ministers of G6 countries (France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Poland and Spain) and US Secretary for Internal Security Janet Napolitano reach an agreement to intensify the exchange of information and coordinate preventive actions in the fight against terrorism and organised crime.
- 9** **Brazil:** various agreements are signed between Confindustria (the Italian industrialists' confederation) and FIESP (its Brazilian counterpart) during the visit of an Italian delegation to Brazil. Agreements are also reached between the Italian Ministry for Economic Development and the Brazilian Agency for support to small and medium-sized enterprise. At the same time, the Council for Italian-Brazilian Cooperation meets in Brasilia with the aim of setting up a strategic partnership between the two countries.
- 10** **Iran:** Iran's announcement that it launched a communications satellite with the help of an Italian firm is denied by the company itself (Gavazzi) and by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Battisti case/Brazil:** Brazilian Minister of Justice Tanso Genro accuses the Italian government of "humiliating Brazil" by interfering in the Cesare Battisti trial.
- 13** **Serbia:** during the Italy-Serbia summit in Rome, partnership agreements are signed regarding energy, transport, infrastructure, agriculture and the environment as well as the training of personnel in military institutions in the two countries.
- 16-19** **Turkey:** during a state visit to Turkey, President of the Italian Republic Giorgio Napolitano meets Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Turkish President Abdullah Gul. Napolitano

states that the negotiations for Turkey's entry into the European Union must continue since the country represents "value added for Europe". Foreign Minister Franco Frattini, also in Istanbul for the sixth Forum for Italian-Turkish Dialogue, underlines Italy's support for Turkey's entry into the EU.

- 18** **Bosnia Herzegovina:** the Council of Ministers approves a bill for the ratification and implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Union and Bosnia Herzegovina aimed at promoting trade. Foreign Minister Franco Frattini is pleased with the UN Security Council's decision to extend the mandate of the EU military mission to Bosnia Herzegovina (EUFOR-Althea) for another year.

Battisti case/Brazil: the Brazilian Supreme Court accepts Italy's request for extradition of Cesare Battisti. Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and Justice Minister Tarso Genro criticise the decision.

- 19-24** **EU/Appointments:** after Catherine Ashton's appointment to the post of EU High Representative for Foreign Policy instead of the Italian candidate, former Foreign Minister Massimo D'Alema, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi recandidates Antonio Tajani as Transport Commissioner, aiming at the same time to broaden the portfolio (still vice president of the Commission and in charge of transport, but also responsible for related industrial sectors). The other goal generally attributed to Berlusconi is the appointment of Giulio Tremonti, Minister of the Economy, to the position of president of the Eurogroup (coordination of the ministries of the economy and finance of the Eurozone countries).

- 25** **Afghanistan:** after a telephone conversation with US President Barack Obama and a meeting in Rome with NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi confirms Italy's willingness to increase the Italian contingent in Afghanistan. In order to do so, Italian troops in other areas (Balkans and Lebanon) will probably be reduced.

Turkmenistan: the president of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov meets Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi in Rome. During the visit, four political and economic agreements are signed in the fields of energy, infrastructure, exchanges of goods and services and exchanges in culture and the arts. ENI and Finmeccanica are in the forefront in these agreements.

- 26** **EU/Appointments:** the Italian candidate for European Commissioner, Antonio Tajani, is appointed Commissioner in charge of Industry and Entrepreneurship.

- 30** **Guantanamo:** Adel Ben Mabrouk and Riadh Ben Mohamed Nasri, two former prisoners in Guantanamo arrive in Italy in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding signed in September between Justice Minister Angelino Alfano and his US counterpart Eric Holder. The two men are immediately imprisoned after their arrival because both are the object of arrest warrants issued by Italian judicial authorities.

Belarus: Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi travels to Minsk to meet Belarus President Aleksandr Lukashenko. It is the first official visit of a European leader in twelve years. Berlusconi declares that Lukashenko's love for his people is evident "from the electoral results that are before everyone's eyes". The Belarus president hands over to Berlusconi files from the Russian KGB secret service archives containing information on Italians that disappeared in Belarus during the second world war and on those that were victims of Stalin's persecutions during the thirties.

December

- 2-3** **Latin American and the Caribbean:** the IV Italy-Latin America and the Caribbean Conference is held in Milan, signalling the interest of the Italian government in political and trade relations with

countries in that area.

- 3** **Russia:** the intergovernmental Italy-Russia summit, preceded on December 2 by the IV Forum for Italian-Russian Dialogue, concentrates on security (Iran and Afghanistan), economic relations and energy. Italy is in favour of rapidly concluding the negotiations on the EU-Russia partnership.
- Afghanistan/NATO:** the Council of Ministers announces that Italy intends to send 1000 more troops to Afghanistan during 2010. Italian reinforcements will be destined for the western part of Afghanistan. To support the mission, the Italian contingents in Lebanon and the Balkans will be reduced.
- 6** **United States/Amanda Knox case:** the trial in Perugia in which an American student is convicted of murder risks causing tension between the United States and Italy following statements by US Senator Maria Cantwell insinuating doubts about the independence and impartiality of the Italian judiciary. There are no formal complaints from the US government about the outcome of the trial.
- 7-8** **EU/Middle East:** Italy, Germany and the Czech Republic obtain changes to the original text on the Israelo-Palestinian conflict proposed by the Swedish EU presidency. In particular, the part concerning the request to recognise East Jerusalem as the capital of the future Palestinian state is toned down.
- 9-10** **West Bank/Israel:** Foreign Minister Franco Frattini visits the West Bank and Israel. During his talks with the prime minister of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) Salam Fayyad, Frattini announces a further contribution of €10 million to the PNA's budget. In Israel, Frattini discusses with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his counterpart Avigdor Lieberman the Iranian file and, in view of the bilateral summit scheduled for February 1-3 2010, relations between Italy and Israel.
- 10** **Afghanistan:** Minister of Defence Ignazio La Russa states that Italy will deploy an average of 3300 soldiers in Afghanistan, which should reach 3700 by the end of October 2010.
- 10-11** **EU/Environment/Immigration:** at the European Council in Brussels, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi promises to contribute €200 million for the 2010-12 period to the Fast Start fund aimed at financing initiatives against climate change in developing countries. The total contribution of EU countries will be €2.4 million per year. Italy also manages to have an explicit mention of EU agreements with third countries on migratory policies included in the Stockholm programme, adopted by the Council to develop more integration in the European justice and security sectors in the 2010-2014 period.
- 12** **Piracy:** Italy takes command of the EU "Atalanta" military naval mission.
- 14** **Israel:** the first session of the Italy-Israel strategic dialogue dealing with bilateral and international issues is held in Rome.
- 14-15** **Iraq:** the first meeting of the Italy-Iraq joint commission is held in Rome. Representing a first step in the implementation of the 2007 Treaty of friendship, cooperation and partnership, the commission is to encourage political dialogue, capacity building initiatives promoted by Italy and credit in favour of Iraq. Foreign Minister Franco Frattini and his Iraqi counterpart Hoshyar Zebari sign a document of agreement that creates facilitations for Italy's penetration of the Iraqi market.
- 15** **Japan:** Italy and Japan sign a bilateral agreement for mutual administrative assistance and customs cooperation.
- 16** **United States:** Italy and the United States exchange ratifications of the Convention between Italy and United States on avoiding double taxation, a measure meant to prevent fiscal fraud. The

convention was signed in 1999.

- 17 Missions abroad:** the Council of Ministers approves the decree law refinancing missions abroad until June 30 2010.
- 18 Mauritania:** an Italian couple, Sergio Cicala and his wife, Philomène Kabourée, are kidnapped in Mauritania while travelling to Burkina Faso. The kidnapping of the couple and their driver from the Ivory Coast takes place in the southeastern part of the country on a road close to the Mali border. The kidnappers are thought to belong to al-Qaeda.
- 19 UN/Environment:** Minister for the Environment Stefania Prestigiacomo considers the Copenhagen Conference on climate change which started on December 7 a “failure”.
- 20 Guantanamo:** Moez Ben Abdelkader Fezzani, the third of the three Tunisian former prisoners in Guantanamo that Italy has agreed to take in through the Memorandum of Understanding signed in September by Justice Minister Angelino Alfano and his US counterpart Eric Holder, arrives in Italy. Like the other two who arrived on November 30, he is immediately incarcerated because of an arrest warrant in his name issued by the Court of Milan for serious offences aggravated by the aim of terrorism.
- 21 Germany:** Foreign Minister Franco Frattini and his German counterpart Guido Westerwelle agree to carry out a joint mission in a crisis area (Bosnia or Afghanistan) and set up a stable political coordination mechanism on the main issues of European politics. Referring to Italy, Westerwelle states that “there is no other country in the world to which Germany is closer”, referring to their agreement on major international questions: Afghanistan, Iran and Russia.
- 22 Mauritania:** the presumed head of the band that kidnapped the Italian couple on December 18 and perhaps took them to Mali is arrested. Foreign Minister Franco Frattini is in touch with the governments of Mauritania, Burkina Faso and Mali. Italy does not have embassies in these countries, but on December 21 Frattini receives an offer of diplomatic assistance from Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos.
- 28 Mauritania:** the Arab tv channel Al Arabiya receives an audio message and a photograph from a group belonging to “Al Qaeda for the Maghreb” which claims to have kidnapped the Italian couple in response to the “crimes perpetrated by the Italian government in Afghanistan and Iraq”. Foreign Minister Franco Frattini states that the government does not intend to negotiate with the terrorists and that Italian commitments abroad will not change.
- 30 Iran:** Foreign Minister Franco Frattini summons the political attaché of the Iranian embassy in Rome to express this firm condemnation of the Iranian government’s repression of demonstrators on December 27-28 and states that he has requested “the EU presidency to take a formal step” against Iran.