

INTERROGATION FOR A WRITTEN ANSWER BY HON. AIELLO

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ANSWER

The Italian commitment in the Horn of Africa has traditionally been directed both at countering widespread and deep-rooted instability and creating partnerships with local governments, while at the same time guaranteeing political and economic stability and sustainability.

In this context, an Agreement in this specific sector was signed on the 10th of April 2019, as you mentioned. The Agreement's parliamentary ratification process has already been completed by both parties, confirming their common will to strengthen the bilateral cooperation.

With the signing of the Agreement, the Italian Ministry of Defense has launched a cooperation project with Ethiopia, particularly in the technical, operational and training sectors. The aim is to contribute to the development of capacities in the defense and security sectors. With the intention to provide the other party with the institutional tools necessary to face jihadist activities and other security challenges to which it is constantly called upon.

In terms of its content, the Agreement includes forms of cooperation in the field of Defense Materiel, particularly referring to the sector of products and procurement policy, research, product development and military equipment.

In light of the deteriorating situation in Tigray, I report that the Dicastery has ceased all types of activities under the Cooperation Agreement.

In this delicate context, the MAECI (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation) continues to follow the developments of the crisis with the utmost attention and extreme concern. In the wake of Italy's traditional commitment to Ethiopia and the entire Horn of Africa's region, as recalled in the introduction.

In this regard, I report that, at the outbreak of the conflict, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, gave a negative opinion to the requests for authorization received by the National Authority UAMA - Unit for the Authorization of Armament Material - regarding the export of any armament or "dual-use" material to Ethiopia. Given that it would not be able to exclude the risk of use of those materials in the context of the hostilities in progress.

In addition, the close coordination with international partners, first and foremost the European Union and the United States, was initiated to intensify diplomatic pressure on all the actors involved to reach a negotiated resolution to the crisis.

In this framework, in line with the positions of the European Union, Italy strongly supports the full and immediate cessation of hostilities and the total withdrawal of Eritrean troops from Ethiopian soil, as well as a full, safe and unconditional humanitarian access to the regions most affected by the conflict; the respect for international humanitarian law, the conclusion of transparent and independent investigations into serious human rights violations and abuses and, last but not least, the urgent launch of an effective and inclusive process of national dialogue.

These expectations have been expressed to the Ethiopian authorities on all occasions of political dialogue with Addis Ababa. The most recent was on the 8th of October, during the bilateral meeting between the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the President of the African Union Commission Moussa Faki Mahamat, in the context of the third Italy-Africa Conference.

Concerning the sensitive issue of human rights, our Country has supported from the outset the joint investigation by the Ethiopian Commission and the Office of the UN High Commissioner - launched in May 2021. Which led to the establishment of an independent international Commission of Inquiry under the UN Human Rights Council - as well as the fact-finding mission on Tigray of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, which operates in the context of the African Union.

Furthermore, Italy reiterated its call for the full respect of human rights and international humanitarian law in the framework of the United Nations Human Rights Council, supporting, in particular, a resolution condemning the serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in Tigray. As well as, on a national level, on the occasion of the Interactive Dialogue with High Commissioner Bachelet on the human rights situation in Tigray.

Finally, within the UN Human Rights Council, Italy has adhered together with the other EU countries (with the sole exception of Hungary) to the joint statement promoted by the United Kingdom in response to the Ethiopian Federal Government's decision to expel UN officials. Asking the Ethiopian government to immediately withdraw its decision and allow again access to the country, to continue support activities, without further impediments.

THE MINISTER  
*Lorenzo Guerini*