

The Mediterranean is the heart of our political and cultural actions

Italian prime minister **Matteo Renzi** stresses the importance of Europe-US relations, and Italy's support for the people of North Africa

The great challenge that's been thrown out in the relationship between the US and the European Union is a fascinating challenge. I do think that in Europe we need reforms, but we also need more growth. I think that Europe must be the place where politics will give hope back to our families ...

Our grandfathers had to fight for Europe. The United States had to fight to save democracy in Europe. And in Europe, there was a fratricidal war. I know that my mother used to cry before the Berlin Wall, when that boundary fell, when it broke down. And my generation is the Erasmus generation. I'm thinking of a future generation where there will be a stronger unification process, and where in Europe there will be peace and stability, but where there will also be growth and the fight against youth unemployment. We will be investing in our hopes and our prosperity ...

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And I think that in the EU semester during which Italy will have the presidency, we will be delivering the same message. And, clearly, Italy will work on the reform and process that is under way ... I can just confirm that we do want to change Italy, because we are convinced of the fact that if we change Italy, we'll be helping Europe to change as well, and we'll be strengthening our relations with the US evermore.

So from this standpoint, I do confirm the commitment of our country together with European partners and together with the United States, and in particular in the Mediterranean region. The Mediterranean is the place that the Romans used to call 'Our Sea' – 'Mare Nostrum'. Maybe it's not the most appropriate translation. In other words, in Latin they say 'Mare Nostrum'. But we mean when we say this that there were youngsters who triggered the Arab Spring and, therefore, we need to support all this. We need to support the desire for freedom and democracy of the Libyans and of the people living in North Africa. So this is what I mean when I say it's 'Our Sea', in particular ...

Europe should not consider the Mediterranean as a frontier. It should be seen as the heart of our political and cultural and moral actions.

Now, I also wish to underscore that the relations between the United States and the European Union and Italy are still strong,



despite the difficult moment in connection with the Ukrainian crisis. President Obama and the European nations in the G7 meeting discussed, in fact, the crisis in Ukraine, and we shared the view that we do not uphold the decisions made by Russia. This goes against international law. And we tried to convey a message showing our unity, our strength and our great concern, and yet our great resolve – the resolve of the international community.

During the Italian presidency of the European Union, Prime Minister Renzi hopes to be able to move forward in economic cooperation and also in ICT



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I also appreciated the words of President Obama at the G7 meeting when he reiterated the need to look into energy issues more thoroughly. I think that during the Italian presidency of the EU, we'll be able to work with determination and resolve and tenacity. And I also hope that during our presidency of the EU, we'll be able to move forward in economic cooperation and also in ICT [information and communication technology], for example,

and in connection with our traditional values and the hopes that we have in terms of boosting employment and doing this also through the ICT sector. ■

Taken from remarks made by Prime Minister Renzi during a joint press conference with US president Barack Obama in Rome, 27 March 2014