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ONE) - BERLUSCONI IN TUNISIA TO CONTAIN IMMIGRATION WAVE

Le chef du gouvernement italien Silvio Berlusconi est arrivé lundi à Tunis pour une visite éclair de quelques heures dans un climat bilatéral alourdi par les questions d'immigration sauvage de migrants tunisiens vers l'Italie, a constaté l'AFP. M. Berlusconi, accompagné de son ministre de l'Intérieur Roberto Maroni, devait avoir des entretiens avec le président tunisien par intérim Foued Mebazaa, puis rencontrer le Premier ministre de transition Béji Caïd Essebsi. Il devait quitter Tunis après un déjeuner et une conférence de presse. Parallèlement, M. Maroni devait rencontrer dans la matinée son homologue tunisien Habib Essid, nommé il y a à peine une semaine. Le ton est monté ces derniers jours entre les deux pays sur la question des départs massifs de clandestins tunisiens vers l'île italienne de Lampedusa. La petite île, face aux côtes tunisiennes, a été submergée par une vague d'immigrés depuis le début de l'année, plus de 22.000, essentiellement des Tunisiens. Samedi le ministère tunisien des Affaires étrangères avait affirmé qu'aucun accord n'avait été signé le 25 mars pour bloquer l'immigration sauvage vers Lampedusa, lors de la visite de Maroni et de son homologue Franco Frattini. "Suite à des déclarations dans certains medias italiens de partis politiques sur le non respect par la Tunisie d'un accord sur l'immigration clandestine signé (lors de la visite des deux ministres italiens, ndlr), le ministère (tunisien) tient à indiquer qu'aucun accord n'a été signé", avait indiqué une source officielle tunisienne. Le 25 mars, Franco Frattini avait annoncé une aide à la Tunisie de 80 millions d'euros pour la lutte contre l'immigration clandestine. Son collègue de l'Intérieur Roberto Maroni avait pour sa part menacé Tunis lundi dernier de rapatrier de force les immigrés arrivés ces derniers temps sur l'île de Lampedusa si les autorités tunisiennes ne bloquaient pas les départs à partir de leurs côtes. Berlusconi, cité par Ansa, a déclaré dimanche qu'il se rendait à Tunis "pour voir si un gouvernement non élu et faible réussira à s'imposer et à éviter de nouveaux départs". Cette dernière déclaration n'a pas donné lieu à une réaction officielle tunisienne. "Nous nous expliquerons directement avec lui (Berlusconi) quand il sera là", a commenté à l'AFP un officiel tunisien sous couvert de l'anonymat. (AFP)

TWO) – ITALY CAN LEGALIZE TUNISIAN IMMIGRANTS TO AVOID FRENCH EXPULSIONS, SAYS EU COMMISSION

There is no European Union law that can prevent Italy from legalizing irregular migrants from North Africa so that they can travel to other EU countries, the European Commission said Monday. The Italian government said Friday it might pursue that policy after France started to send back some Tunisian refugees that had initially landed on Italy's shores but wanted to relocate on French territory. "Member states have the right to authorize the stay of whoever they want on their territory," Marcin Grabiec, spokesman for EU Home Affairs commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom, told reporters in Brussels. "If it is the wish of a member state, it is possible," he added. Grabiec also said that the commission had received on Friday a letter from French Interior Minister Claude Gueant explaining that France's push backs of migrants complied with the EU's Schengen system, which abolished internal borders. Gueant's letter clearly stated that French police controls near the border with Italy were "random," and did not amount to a surrogate reintroduction of border checks -which would be in breach of Schengen, Grabiec said. However, the spokesman could not indicate how the commission could check how Gueant's pledge corresponded to reality on the ground. "For the time being, I do not have a clear answer to this question," he said. France signed a bilateral agreement just before Italy entered into Schengen in 1997, allowing it to send back to Italy any irregular migrants found on its territory, provided that authorities had grounds to believe that they had crossed from the Italian border. (Dpa)

THREE) – EU COMMISSION TO SEEK TEMPORARY PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE ARRIVING FROM NORTH AFRICA

La Commission européenne envisage de demander l'activation d'une procédure exceptionnelle pour accueillir les réfugiés d'Afrique du Nord dans l'UE et compte lancer le débat dès la semaine prochaine, a-t-elle indiqué lundi soir. Il s'agirait, "dans le cas d'un afflux massif de personnes déplacées et de réfugiés" de Libye, Tunisie ou Egypte, d'"utiliser la directive de 2001 prévoyant une protection temporaire" de ces migrants dans les pays européens, a déclaré la commissaire chargée des questions d'immigration, Cecilia Malmström, devant le Parlement européen. Les conditions d'activation de la procédure ne sont actuellement pas réunies car la

majorité qualifiée nécessaire des pays de l'Union européenne pour la valider n'existe pas. Il n'empêche: la Commission va "suivre la question de près et la poser à l'occasion du conseil des ministres prévu la semaine prochaine", a précisé Mme Malmström, en référence à une réunion des ministres européens de l'Intérieur prévue le 11 avril. L'idée serait d'"offrir une protection à ces personnes dans les Etats membres" de l'Union européenne et de faire jouer "la solidarité" entre pays, a-t-elle dit. Cette clause n'a encore jamais été utilisée dans l'Union européenne. Elle a été adoptée en 2001 pour permettre à l'Europe de faire face collectivement à un afflux très prononcé de réfugiés ou de personnes déplacées, comme avant cela lors de la guerre au Kosovo en 1999. La [directive européenne en question](#) permet aux bénéficiaires de la protection temporaire de recevoir un titre de séjour et de se voir accorder un droit d'accès à l'emploi, à un logement, à l'assistance sociale, aux soins médicaux et au système scolaire. Les membres proches de la famille peuvent être réunis également. Cette protection a au départ une durée d'un an, avec possibilité d'une prorogation de deux fois six mois. Des ONG militent depuis déjà plusieurs semaines pour que l'UE active cette clause. Mais jusqu'ici les Européens s'étaient gardés d'évoquer son utilisation. L'Italie se plaint du manque de soutien de ses partenaires européens et de l'UE face à l'arrivée d'un nombre important d'immigrants clandestins venus de Tunisie principalement. Rome aimerait que d'autres pays de l'UE prennent en charge une partie des arrivants, ce que ces derniers rechignent à faire. La petite île italienne de Lampedusa, située face aux côtes tunisiennes, est en première ligne: elle a été submergée par une vague d'immigrés depuis le début de l'année, qui a atteint plus de 22.000 personnes. (See [more details on temporary protection](#)) (AFP)

FOUR) - UGANDA: SUN SMILING ON RENEWABLE ENERGY INITIATIVE

Clementine Auma was still living in a displaced person's camp in Gulu district when she acquired the treasure she's gone into the house to fetch. She re-emerges from her home with a white box in her arms: a solar oven.

She opens the box to pull out the oven, which she quickly assembles, folding out four aluminium reflectors from a black box fitted with glass. The 65-year-old Auma squints at the sky, then positions the oven to best direct the sun's rays on a pot to boil water for tea.

"You have to make sure that you see the shadow of the oven while facing the sun, so you have positioned it well to trap the sun," she says.

Auma is one of a small handful to receive a Sun Oven during a pilot project in southwestern and northern Uganda, testing them before manufacture and sale nationwide.

"It is very good," she says of her oven, "because you can boil tea even while you are digging in the garden.

Sun Oven

Her oven is a box roughly 50 x 50 centimetres, and 30 centimetres deep. Its outer shell is made of plastic, lined with insulation to keep heat in, and then an inner shell of anodised aluminium and a clever swinging shelf that both allows the hot air in the cooking chamber to circulate all around the pot and automatically levels the base of the oven, which should be tilted towards the sun using an adjustable leg built into the back of the box.

The cooking chamber - matt black to better convert the sun's rays into heat - is covered with tempered glass to keep the hot air in: the Sun Oven, say its manufacturers, reaches temperatures comparable to a standard oven. The whole ensemble weighs 9.5 kilos.

Margaret Sempijja, says these ovens can be used to cook almost any kind of food, as long as the chef knows how to mix it before putting it in. "Some people don't know that posho [a staple meal of ground maize] can be prepared in this oven. But posho which is prepared in this oven is wonderful," she smiles. Another woman with experience using the solar oven, Saida Matovu, says she has found it both convenient and efficient, but she complains that the pot is very small if one has a large family to feed - and of course the whole apparatus is useless on rainy days.

A larger version of the solar oven is also available, big enough to serve in institutional settings such as a school or an orphanage.

Over 90 percent of Uganda's population relies on biomass - usually wood - for cooking and heating in rural and urban areas alike. Studies by the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) indicate that firewood and charcoal contribute 88 and 6 percent to the country's total energy consumption, respectively. Electricity and hydrocarbons account for the remainder.

Appropriate technology

Prince Ronald Mutebi first saw a Sun Oven at a Rotarians' conference in a Chicago hotel seven years ago and immediately thought that it could be a useful tool to both slow deforestation from harvesting firewood and protect the health of Ugandan women suffering from respiratory diseases linked to long hours spent cooking over a smoky wood fire.

Mutebi, now the Executive Director of Sun Oven Uganda Tek Consult Group, partnered with U.S.-based Sun Oven International to import the stoves which he has since field tested in rural areas. He now plans to set up a manufacturing plant that will distribute the sun stoves across East Africa.

"I knew about the technology but I had never seen the technology this effective. And when I saw it at the conference in my mind I said Ugandan sits just at the equator so we have the abundant sun. So if it works elsewhere, then it will work in Uganda," Mutebi told IPS in an interview.

He explained that the oven is so well insulated that it can keep food warm for up to four hours, as long as the cooking chamber is not opened.

"It is culturally sensitive: you can cook dinner at 5:00 p.m. and not serve it until later in the night. So it can work in most communities where dinner is normally served in the night [long after the sun has set]."

These ovens were developed in the mid 1980s by Tom Burns, a retired restaurant owner in the United States and long-term member of Rotary International, who set out to make a durable and inexpensive solar oven. Rugged and rust-proof thanks to the use of aluminium, the ovens, according to Mutebi, should have a fifteen-year lifespan.

Mutebi says the oven will initially be sold in Uganda for the equivalent of 170 dollars, but that price could go down once mass production starts. "Still that cost is high for an average Ugandan. So we're planning to create sort of a hire-purchase scheme for the ovens, whereby people can pay in installments," he said.

Spreading the word

Several development groups in Uganda have seen the Sun Oven as an opportunity to bring change in communities. The Nyanya-Kentale Kukama Butonde Group, a local environmental group based in Rakai district in southwestern Uganda is promoting it.

David Sentongo, the group's chair, told IPS that demand for the ovens is steadily increasing as the communities come to know about its benefits.

"We got fifteen ovens which we distributed to a first group of our members. Out of the fifteen, we gave two to some people in the communities who are not our members, just to show those Sun Ovens are for everyone," he said.

He wants the group to acquire an industrial-size unit that could be used as a community oven for baking. Mutebi said Sun Oven Uganda already has the components to assemble 365 solar ovens in the country; he hopes to put them together and on the market before the end of the year.

He told IPS that price remains the biggest obstacle to the ovens rapidly gaining a foothold. Relatively few households will have that much money to put down, but high interest rates for consumer loans make arranging financing a difficult challenge.

Back in Gulu district, Clementine Auma is reluctant to lend her precious oven to anyone, despite its portability. "Some people come to borrow it to make bread, but my fear is that it could get damaged."

Back into her thatched-roof house it disappears: a valuable tool to protect health and the environment. And to make marvelous, flavourful posho.

FIVE) – ITALY RECOGNIZES LIBYAN REBELS, OFFERS THEM WEAPONS

Italy threw its full support behind Libyan rebels on Monday, formally recognising them as the only legitimate representatives of the country and promising to supply them with weapons to fight and experts to rebuild. Rome, the former Libyan colonial power, also said overtures from envoys sent by Muammar Gaddafi who travelled to some European capitals were "not credible" and demanded that Gaddafi and his family had to leave the country. "We have decided to recognise the council as the only political, legitimate interlocutor to represent Libya," Foreign Minister Franco Frattini said after talks with Ali Essawi, the member of the Libyan rebel council in charge of foreign affairs. The comments were the clearest sign yet from Italy, previously Gaddafi's closest friend in Europe, that it now fully backs the Transitional National Council, the rebel group that has coalesced out of disparate anti-Gaddafi forces. Frattini said he had spoken to officials in Greece after Deputy Libyan Foreign Minister Abdelati Obeidi flew there to discuss an end to the fighting in Libya. "These proposals are not credible," he said, adding that he had spoken to the Greek foreign minister who said Gaddafi's envoy had pledged to respect a ceasefire. "But nothing was said about the departure of Gaddafi,

which is one of the conditions, so it is not possible to accept this point of view," Frattini said. "A solution for the future of Libya has a pre-condition -- that Gaddafi's regime leaves and is out and that Gaddafi himself and his family leave the country," he said. The foreign minister promised that Italy, which is part of the western coalition carrying out airstrikes against Gaddafi's forces, would arm the rebels if they needed the weapons to defend themselves, particularly if civilians were at risk. "Since we (the coalition forces) cannot fight on the ground, helping people to self defence through supply of arms cannot be excluded according to the U.N. resolution," he said, adding that coalition air strikes were still necessary. "We will discuss this with our partners, but under a strictly legal point of view (arming rebels) cannot be seen as being against the resolution," he said. Speaking alongside Frattini, Ali Essawi sought to reassure his hosts that companies including oil giant Eni, one of the biggest foreign producers in Libya, would not be penalised by a future rebel government. He said the legitimate rights of foreigners and foreign companies in Libya would be respected. (Reuters)

SIX) – ENI BOSS HAS DISCUSSED OIL PLANS WITH LIBYAN REBELS

The head of Italian oil group Eni Paolo Scaroni has discussed energy cooperation with the Libyan rebel movement in Benghazi in recent days, Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini said on Monday. "The CEO of Italian company Eni visited Benghazi two days ago," Frattini told reporters in Rome after a meeting with Ali Essawi, a member of the Libyan rebel council with responsibility for foreign affairs. "He contacted the council. He had important meetings on restarting cooperation about energy with the council that has the responsibility and the possibility to restart economic cooperation." Eni, the biggest foreign oil company in Libya with contracts in place until past 2042, declined to comment. Some analysts had expressed concern that Eni's dominant position in Libya's oil sector may have been undermined by Italy's early hesitant backing for pro-rebel foreign military intervention. The foreign ministry later issued a statement saying that Frattini had only meant that Scaroni had spoken to the National Transitional Council by telephone. "Minister Frattini was referring exclusively to telephone contacts between Scaroni and representatives of the NTC," the emailed statement said. (Reuters)

SEVEN) – EU RULES OUT ROLE OF GADDAFI FAMILY IN FUTURE GOVERNMENT

A spokesman for the European Union's top foreign policy official on Monday said that a succession in Libya involving one of leader Moamer Gaddafi's sons would not be acceptable. "The position of the EU is very clear - the Gaddafi regime has lost all legitimacy and has to go," said Michael Mann, a spokesman for Catherine Ashton. "The Gaddafi regime, that is people in the regime and as far as I know, his sons are in the regime." His comments followed a New York Times report that at least two of Gaddafi's sons have suggested the strongman make way for Saif al-Islam Gaddafi to lead a new constitutional democracy as part of a resolution to the unrest gripping the North African country. "We want the will of the people of Libya to be respected," Mann said. "We want to see a transition to a democratic future in Libya." The New York Times said it is not entirely clear if the elder Gaddafi, who has been in power for 42 years, has agreed to the plan. Saif al-Islam, who studied in Vienna and London, is the founder of the Gaddafi International Charity and Development Foundation and owns several commercial enterprises. He has been at odds with his father before, temporarily leaving Libya in 2006 after criticizing Gaddafi's leadership style. Western powers had since considered him as a possible progressive successor. Mann declined to comment Monday on what the EU's position would be if moderate members of Gaddafi's regime were chosen to participate in a new government and in Libya's reconciliation, calling it speculation. A team from Ashton's European External Action Service was due to travel to Libya on Tuesday to meet people in the rebel-held city of Benghazi as part of a "listening exercise," Mann said. (Dpa)

EIGHT) – EUROPEAN POWERS SEEN CAPABLE OF REPLACING U.S. IN WAR ON LIBYA

S'ils font un effort, les Européens ont une puissance de feu aérienne suffisante pour bombarder les forces libyennes de Mouammar Kadhafi, sans participation directe des Etats-Unis à ces frappes, estime-t-on à l'Otan. L'Otan a pris en main les opérations libyennes jeudi, et Washington, qui avait prévu de retirer ses avions de

combat et ses missiles Tomahawk du théâtre des opérations dès ce week-end, a accepté de les maintenir jusqu'à lundi soir, "en raison du mauvais temps". Jusque là, les Américains effectuaient "en moyenne 50% des quelque 70" sorties quotidiennes de bombardement, a indiqué à l'AFP un responsable militaire, précisant qu'il faudrait remplacer une quarantaine d'avions américains. "Donc, pour compenser les moyens américains qui vont manquer, les pays concernés vont devoir notablement multiplier les sorties et déstocker plus de munitions", a-t-il résumé. Selon un communiqué de son Commandement à Naples (sud de l'Italie), entre le 31 mars 08H00 GMT et le 3 avril 22H00 GMT l'opération Protecteur unifiée a effectué quelque 276 sorties de bombardement. "La mission de l'Otan, qui est notamment de protéger les civils, reste inchangée, quelle que soit l'implication de tel ou tel allié, aussi important soit-il", a souligné de son côté un diplomate. Les avions américains comme le tueur de tanks A 10 Thunderbolt et la canonnière des airs AC-130 qui opèrent à basse altitude ne pouvaient de toutes façons guère être utilisés en Libye "en raison de la menace antiaérienne persistante des missiles SA-8 et SA-24" libyens, selon lui. **HUNDREDS OF CRUISE MISSILES LAUNCHED SO FAR** Quant aux installations fixes de l'armée libyenne, elles ont été anéanties par les centaines de Tomahawks tirés par les Américains dans les premiers jours de l'opération multinationale conduite par une coalition ad hoc, du 20 au 30 mars, a-t-il souligné. Maintenant, face aux objectifs mobiles que sont des troupes en marche, l'Alliance atlantique a une centaine d'avions de combat en ligne. Les Français et les Britanniques -avec respectivement une trentaine et une vingtaine d'appareils, dont 18 et 6 seulement d'attaque au sol- vont devoir assumer le gros du travail. L'aviation française "effectue 20 à 25% des sorties quotidiennes, la Britannique un peu moins de 10%", selon la même source. Les cinq autres pays (Belgique, Canada, Danemark, Italie, Norvège) qui ont accepté de participer aux frappes au sol, utilisent une trentaine d'avions au total. "Tous les alliés, en particulier ceux qui participent aujourd'hui peu aux frappes, vont devoir hausser le rythme", a estimé ce responsable militaire. Pour soulager ces derniers, les avions des pays qui comme l'Espagne, les Pays-Bas, le Qatar et la Suède, n'ont pas mandat de leurs autorités nationales pour tirer sur des cibles au sol peuvent se concentrer sur la zone d'interdiction aérienne sur la Libye prévue par la résolution 1973 de l'ONU. Les Américains vont contribuer à la sécurité des opérations avec des avions chargés de missions de surveillance et de reconnaissance électroniques. Plus décisif, sans doute, des drones américains Global Hawks, dont l'utilité pour un ciblage précis des objectifs est précieuse, continuent d'être déployés. Enfin, si jamais les alliés se retrouvaient ponctuellement dans l'incapacité de barrer la route aux soldats libyens, il est convenu qu'ils puissent "demander de l'aide aux Etats-Unis, au cas par cas", a-t-on confirmé de plusieurs sources. (AFP)

NINE) – LIBYAN REBELS URGENTLY WANT TO SELL OIL, GAS

Libyan rebels fighting forces loyal to leader Muammar Gaddafi are worried about their financial resources and want to start exporting both oil and natural gas, the U.N. special envoy to Libya said on Monday. Abdelilah al-Khatib, the former foreign minister of Jordan and U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's special envoy to Libya, spoke to the Security Council about his recent visits to Libya, where he met with the rebels' Transitional National Council and members of Gaddafi's government in Tripoli. "The council raised concerns about the lack of funds as well as issues surrounding the marketing and sale of oil and gas, stressing that the issue required urgent attention in order to enable the economy to function effectively," Khatib told the 15-nation Security Council. "The council pointed out that sustainability was dependent on two major sources, loans guaranteed against oil and gas sale and overseas frozen assets," he said. Libyan rebels may this week sell the first tanker of crude since an uprising against Gaddafi halted exports from the North African country and sent oil prices higher. Satellite ship tracking data AIS showed the oil tanker Equator, which can carry up to one million barrels of oil, was due to arrive at the rebel-held Libyan port of Marsa el Hariga on Tuesday. The tanker is now anchored in Egyptian waters. Because of links to Gaddafi's family, the Libyan National Oil Corporation and the Libyan central bank were hit with sanctions last month in a U.N. Security Council resolution that also authorized a no-fly zone and air strikes. Libyan oil is not subject to U.N. sanctions as long it is not exported by any blacklisted Libyan firm. (Reuters)

TEN) – U.S. LIFTS SANCTIONS ON LIBYA'S EX-FOREIGN MINISTER

The United States lifted financial sanctions against former Libyan foreign minister Moussa Koussa on Monday in the hopes that it will encourage other senior officials in Muammar Gaddafi's regime to defect. The U.S. Treasury is ending its freeze on Koussa's assets following his decision to sever ties to Gaddafi's government

and flee to Britain last week, a senior U.S. Treasury official said. "Koussa's defection and the subsequent lifting of sanctions against him should encourage others within the Libyan government to make similar decisions to abandon the Gaddafi regime," David Cohen, the Treasury's acting undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence, said. The Treasury has imposed sanctions on 13 senior Libyan government officials and Cohen said he expects to add more officials to the blacklist in the coming days and work "aggressively" to identify others. The sanctions seek to freeze any assets they hold in international financial institutions and ban U.S. entities from any transactions with them. So far, the United States has frozen more than \$33 billion in Libyan assets in order to bring pressure on Gaddafi's government and prevent his regime from using violence against the dissidents trying to oust him. The decision to lift sanctions against Koussa, whom Scottish prosecutors want to question in connection with the Pan Am Flight 103 bombing over Lockerbie, appears aimed at enticing members of Gaddafi's inner circle to abandon him by restoring their access to their financial nest eggs. (Reuters)

ELEVEN) – GREECE CLOSES EMBASSY IN LIBYA

La Grèce a annoncé lundi la fermeture de son ambassade à Tripoli et a confié la représentation de ses intérêts à la Hongrie qui assume la présidence de l'Union européenne, alors qu'Athènes tente de favoriser un cessez-le-feu en Libye. "Le fonctionnement de l'ambassade de Grèce à Tripoli est suspendu", a indiqué le ministère grec des Affaires étrangères dans un communiqué. "L'ambassade de la Hongrie qui exerce la présidence de l'Union européenne, va prendre en charge la représentation des intérêts grecs", ajoute le ministère. Le ministère ne donne aucune raison à la fermeture de son ambassade, qui survient au lendemain d'une rencontre entre le Premier ministre grec Georges Papandreou et un émissaire du régime de Mouammar Kadhafi, le vice-ministre des Affaires étrangères, Abdelati Laabidi. Le ministre grec des Affaires étrangères, Dimitris Droutsas avait indiqué à la suite de cet entretien qu'il semblait "que le régime (libyen) cherche une solution" au conflit. Une source gouvernementale grecque avait de son côté souligné que la Grèce pouvait "jouer un rôle important dans la recherche d'une solution politique" au conflit libyen. La Grèce, historiquement proche des diplomaties arabes, fait partie de la coalition internationale qui a commencé ses interventions aériennes au-dessus de la Libye le 19 mars. Elle a mis à disposition de la coalition quatre bases militaires. Le gouvernement grec n'a toutefois pas engagé d'avions de combat dans l'opération. (AFP)

TWELVE) – EU ENVOYS TO MEET LIBYAN REBELS IN BENGHAZI

The European Union will send envoys to the rebel-controlled Libyan city of Benghazi on Tuesday, part of efforts by Western countries to establish better contacts with Muammar Gaddafi's opponents. With French and British forces leading moves by NATO to drive Gaddafi from power through air strikes and other measures that have bolstered opposition forces, work is also going on to build a better understanding of who the rebels are and what sort of backing they have within Libya's broader society. As well as meeting rebel leaders, some of whom have already met senior EU officials in Brussels, the EU envoys will hold meetings with community leaders in the northeast, a spokesman for EU foreign affairs chief, Catherine Ashton, said. "There is a mission going to Libya tomorrow. It is a listening exercise," spokesman Michael Mann told reporters. France has already sent a special envoy to Benghazi, Libya's second largest city and the rebel headquarters, and Italy's foreign minister, Franco Frattini, met a senior member of the rebel council on Monday. The chief executive of Italian energy group ENI has also visited Benghazi in the past two days to discuss energy cooperation with the rebels, Frattini said. Ashton's spokesman said the EU envoys would not have any direct contact with Gaddafi's government, but did not expand. "We are not directly talking to the Gaddafi regime but we are of course gathering as much information as we can," he said. Unlike France, Italy and other EU member states, the EU as a whole has not yet officially recognised the opposition Libyan National Council as the country's legitimate authority, instead only referring to it as its "preferred interlocutor". Since February, the EU has imposed a welter of sanctions against Gaddafi, his family and companies that benefits his government to force him from power. As well as asset freezes, there are travel bans and an oil embargo. At least 10 EU states are also participating in the NATO-led no-fly zone and air strikes that have targeted Gaddafi's military infrastructure and are, under a United Nations security council resolution, designed to protect civilians. The bloc may also soon launch a military-backed humanitarian operation with the aim of supplying food, shelter and other needs to refugee camps on the Tunisian and Egyptian borders. The mission will be launched if requested by the U.N., the EU said. (Reuters)

THIRTEEN) – EU HAS NO OBJECTIONS TO LIBYAN REBELS SELLING OIL

L'Union européenne n'a pas d'objections concernant l'achat éventuel de pétrole aux rebelles libyens du moment que les revenus tirés de cette transaction ne profitent pas au régime du colonel Kadhafi, a affirmé mardi le porte-parole de la chef de la diplomatie de l'UE, Catherine Ashton. "Si les revenus (tirés du pétrole et du gaz) ne profitent pas au régime de Kadhafi, alors nous n'avons aucun problème avec les opérations commerciales concernant le pétrole et le gaz libyens", a dit Michael Mann au cours d'un point de presse. "Concernant le pétrole, notre ligne de conduite est très claire", a-t-il dit. L'UE soutient les résolutions du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU visant à ce que les revenus du pétrole ne parviennent pas dans les mains du régime de Mouammar Kadhafi, a-t-il rappelé. "Pour le reste, ce sont les pratiques commerciales normales qui s'imposeront", a-t-il souligné. Le porte-parole a cependant souligné que l'UE n'avait pas changé de position concernant l'embargo sur les armes imposé à la Libye par les forces de l'Otan, alors que les rebelles espèrent pouvoir aussi acheter des armes avec les revenus du pétrole. **OIL TANKER APPROACHES TOBRUK TERMINAL** Un tanker, d'une capacité d'un million de barils, doit arriver mardi dans le port de Tobrouk (est de la Libye) pour le premier chargement de pétrole assuré par les rebelles opposés au colonel Kadhafi, selon le spécialiste en données maritimes Lloyd's List Intelligence. Au cours actuel du baril, une telle cargaison vaut environ 120 millions de dollars. C'est la première fois que les rebelles libyens, qui contrôlent plusieurs ports de l'est de la Libye, mènent une telle opération. Le Qatar a fait récemment savoir qu'il était prêt à faciliter la vente du pétrole sous contrôle de la rébellion en Libye, ouvrant la perspective d'une partition des richesses énergétiques du pays alors qu'un front militaire mouvant le coupe déjà en deux. L'enjeu est de taille: la Libye produit moins de 2% du pétrole mondial mais elle recèle les plus grandes réserves d'or noir du continent africain, entre 40 et 60 milliards de barils. Et la qualité de son pétrole, pauvre en soufre, à l'exploitation aisée, est appréciée des raffineurs. Des pays européens, comme l'Italie, la France et l'Allemagne sont les premiers consommateurs de brut libyen, mais aussi de gaz transporté par un gazoduc le long de la frontière tunisienne qui rejoint l'Italie sous les eaux de la Méditerranée. Les rebelles tiennent dans l'est les champs de la région de Sarir ainsi que des installations de raffinage et d'exportation à Tobrouk et Benghazi, et cette activité représente plus des deux tiers des revenus du secteur pétrolier libyen. Les loyalistes contrôlent les champs d'el Feel, et les installations de Zawiyah et Tripoli. La rébellion a annoncé vendredi dernier avoir passé un accord avec le Qatar pour commercialiser le pétrole brut des zones qu'elle contrôle en échange de livraisons de nourriture, médicaments et carburant. (AFP)

FOURTEEN) - SARKOZY PLAYS HIGH BUT RISKY IN LIBYA, IVORY COAST WARS

Deux guerres en Libye et en Côte d'Ivoire, deux dirigeants dans le viseur: déjà présente en Afghanistan, la France multiplie les fers au feu sans que cet engagement, lourd de conséquences pour sa stature internationale, suscite de controverse majeure dans le pays. Affaibli sur la scène politique intérieure, Nicolas Sarkozy s'est lancé dans la bataille libyenne sans s'être adressé directement au peuple français pour lui en expliquer les enjeux. "Eviter un bain de sang à Benghazi", "défendre les populations civiles"... Avec cet affichage qui a remis à l'ordre du jour l'ingérence humanitaire, Paris a réussi à entraîner dans son sillage l'ONU. Les résolutions se sont additionnées, ici pour imposer des sanctions au Libyen Mouammar Kadhafi, là pour exiger un terme aux fonctions de l'Ivoirien Laurent Gbagbo. Pour les experts, la France, malgré sa participation aux opérations en Afghanistan, en a les moyens militaires à court terme. Son engagement est aérien en Libye et limité à des troupes pré-positionnées en Côte d'Ivoire. "L'Afghanistan est logistiquement le terrain le plus difficile, avec la mobilisation de moyens à la fois aériens et terrestres", note François Heisbourg de la Fondation pour la recherche stratégique. Dans les conflits libyen comme ivoirien, la France n'est pas seule. Plusieurs pays contribuent aux bombardements en Libye et les Français agissent en Côte d'Ivoire aux côtés des quelque 10.000 hommes de la mission de l'ONU. Mais dans un cas comme dans l'autre, Paris est en première ligne: en Libye, son aviation est la plus engagée; en Côte d'Ivoire, avec des troupes aguerries et bien équipées, la France est le fer de lance d'une opération qui pourrait être l'ultime coup de pouce à Alassane Ouattara pour faire chuter son rival. **FRAGILE POPULAR SUPPORT FOR WARS** A la différence du dossier afghan, qui a lassé l'opinion publique française comme ailleurs, l'engagement militaire en Libye bénéficie d'un soutien quasi-unanime en France. Cet appui reste toutefois fragile, "les démocraties n'aimant pas la guerre", selon l'expression d'un diplomate français. En Côte d'Ivoire, "le rapport de forces est clairement en faveur d'Alassane Ouattara", relève un responsable français s'exprimant sous couvert de l'anonymat, laissant entendre que les combats pourraient ne pas durer. "Plus que la mise en place d'Alassane Ouattara, le plus urgent en Côte d'Ivoire sera la réconciliation des Ivoiriens", met en garde Pascal Boniface de l'Institut des relations internationales et stratégiques (Iris). Pour la Libye, à moins d'une chute imprévisible de Mouammar

Kadhafi, l'enlèvement semble guetter après plus de deux semaines d'opérations. Pour Paris, les écueils sont légion dans les deux dossiers. Ils imposent à la France d'accompagner ses actions militaires de multiples initiatives diplomatiques pour tenter sur un front extérieur de préserver une certaine unité internationale, et sur un plan opérationnel de limiter de possibles effets collatéraux désastreux. Ainsi, Nicolas Sarkozy s'entretient régulièrement avec Alassane Ouattara, dont les forces sont accusées d'avoir commis des exactions dans leur marche sur Abidjan. Le chef de l'Etat français a aussi dépêché à Benghazi un ex-ambassadeur chargé des relations avec l'opposition libyenne aux moyens militaires hasardeux et limités. Incontestablement, après les errements face aux révolutions en Tunisie et en Egypte, la France a retrouvé l'avantage sur la scène diplomatique mondiale, s'engouffrant dans les brèches laissées par une administration américaine en repli. "La France a marqué des points", concède Pascal Boniface. Reste à savoir quelles en seront les conséquences pour le positionnement mondial de la France. Une fois entré dans la logique de guerre, "cela se juge au résultat", souligne François Heisbourg. (AFP)

FIFTEEN) – SOMALIA: MANIFESTATION OF STEALTH TRUSTEESHIP

Somalia is currently under what James Fearon and David Laitin of Stanford University call "a neo-trusteeship system". Various external powers, while disagreeing among themselves, make the important decisions for the Somali people.

On Jan. 30, 2011, the Ethiopian-dominated Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a regional organisation comprised of seven East African states, called for an extension of the Somali parliament's mandate. The dysfunctional Somali parliament duly understood the message sent by Addis Ababa and within three days unilaterally extended its mandate for three years.

The U.S. and U.N. rejected the unilateral extension, with James Steinberg, the US deputy secretary of state, arguing that it would strengthen al-Shabaab and Augustine Mahiga, the U.N. special representative for Somalia, joining in the chorus of criticism. The disagreement within the international community over Somalia was exposed, with Ethiopia and IGAD lining up on one side and the U.S. and U.N. on the other.

The fact that agencies within the U.S. have at times pursued different policies in Somalia adds another layer of complexity. The defence department views Somalia through the lens of the 'war on terror' and, as a result, allies itself with Ethiopia, while the state department is aligned more closely with the rest of the international community.

Two months on, the Obama administration is still insisting that the decision to extend the mandate be reversed. As a compromise, Washington has suggested a one-year extension of the parliamentary mandate and two back-to-back presidential elections in August 2011 and 2012.

But the Obama administration has condemned neither IGAD nor Ethiopia for triggering and defending the Somali parliament's decision at international forums. Logic dictates that if Washington is so serious about this it should direct its concerns to the source of the latest political entanglement - Ethiopia. And, as bizarre as this may seem, Meles Zenawi, the Ethiopian prime minister, could deliver a reversal of the decision much more promptly than the Somali parliament.

Meanwhile, the UK is positioning itself to lead Somalia's post-transition period after August 2011 – a role it sought to kick start during a conference it hosted in February. Unsurprisingly, besides some general recommendations, nothing substantive came out of the gathering.

Although Mahiga participated in the UK conference, he failed to influence its outcome and therefore called for another conference to be held in Nairobi in March. Both the Djibouti government and the TFG rejected this, arguing that it would not advance peace in Somalia. Obviously, this will further exacerbate perceptions that Mahiga, like his predecessors, is micro-managing Somali affairs as though he is the governor of the country. Perhaps a reconciliation conference for Somalia's external patrons is in order.

Missing Somali voices

In all of these discussions the one thing that is missing is the voice of the Somali people. And this politicking does nothing to advance peace or state-building in the country.

Somalis have not elected the members of their parliament; Ethiopia and its proxy warlords selected half of them in 2004, while the rest were selected by Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, the president, and Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan, the speaker of parliament, in 2009, when the parliament was expanded to feature a staggering 550 members.

In the more than six years that the Somali parliament has been in place it has not fulfilled its basic functions, failing to produce a single piece of legislation. In addition, it has not linked the government to the people it claims to represent; many of its members do not even visit, let alone seek to advance the long-term interests

of, their constituencies.

In general, the assumption, although this is not stated publicly of course, that drives these external, paternalistic and, at times, counterproductive initiatives is that Somalia is not ready to become a nation again. There is a widespread belief among members of the international community that Somalis are too divided and too clannish to lead their own state. Some even employ economic arguments to question the viability of a Somali state.

The most important decisions, such as the type of constitution it adopts or who represents the people, are therefore taken with minimal input from the Somali people themselves.

Seeking support

Of course, one may argue that Somalia is not alone in its trust status. The international community has used similar arrangements in a number of cases, including East Timor, Sierra Leone and Liberia. But, at least, the powers that be (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council) were open about their approach to those countries. In these instances, the Security Council deliberated over the available options and then tasked one country with leading the transition process; Australia in East Timor, the UK in Sierra Leone and the U.S. in Liberia.

In Somalia, that is not the case at all.

For the last 20 years, the international community, as divided as it is, has chosen to create or facilitate transitional governments and/or regional administrations. In one way or another, these administrations have been undermined by some members of the same international community. For example, a transitional government was created in 2000 in Djibouti. But, Ethiopia and IGAD undermined it by inviting warlords loyal to them to another conference where a parallel process was set up to torpedo the existing one.

In 2004, another transitional government was established. Even though President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed was willing to work with the international community and sought its assistance, Washington chose to empower Mogadishu warlords while ignoring the government it recognised as legitimate. Within that same modus operandi, when Islamists defeated the warlords, the Bush administration ignored the Somali government, supporting and encouraging the 2006 Ethiopian invasion.

Similarly, the current Sheikh Sharif Ahmed-led government has been struggling for the last two years to secure genuine support. It is true that the TFG has failed to control corruption and has not delivered on the tasks set for it. But it is equally true that while the international community chooses to support, empower and fund - to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars - the AMISOM (African Union Mission in Somalia) forces, it has not provided timely and substantive support to the transitional government.

In 2006, the Islamic Courts Union pacified Mogadishu with a militia of less than 1,000 people. Now, in theory at least, the AMISOM has close to 10,000 troops in Mogadishu, while the TFG claims to have more than 15,000. But even with these forces at their disposal they have failed to pacify Mogadishu, let alone the rest of the country.

It is a public secret that there are many ghost soldiers in the Somali forces and the tribal militias they use. But what about the AMISOM forces – are all of the 8,000 to 10,000 peacekeepers in Mogadishu also ghost soldiers?

Ethiopian meddling

Ethiopia's meddling remains one of the principal obstacles to attaining and sustaining peace in Somalia. Addis Ababa, as it did in the past, has now created proxy militias, which it supports financially and militarily. It is openly involved in the war against al-Shabaab in the central and southern regions of Somalia. And while there is wide opposition to al-Shabaab, Ethiopian involvement in these operations does not have public support. If Ethiopia's past role in Somalia is anything to go by, Zenawi is essentially interested in establishing his proxy groups in those regions so that he can use them to sabotage efforts to re-establish the Somali government. Both the TFG and the international community must expose and reject Ethiopia's harmful interventions. If the TFG remains silent about Addis Ababa's military interventions or attempts to justify them, it will lose twice. Firstly, any territorial gains will have been made by Ethiopia's proxy groups and not by the government. And secondly, the government will lose credibility by jeopardising its greatest achievement – removing Ethiopian troops from Somalia.

Like the government, the international community has not learned from its past mistakes. Outsourcing the Somalia war to Ethiopia backfired, empowering al-Shabaab at the expense of other groups. When Ethiopia was removed from the country, al-Shabaab dramatically lost the support of the people and communities began to organise themselves against the group.

The lesson here is that the best way to defeat violent extremism or piracy in Somalia is by helping to build a powerful central state, not via the dysfunctional trusteeship of many masters or clan fiefdoms. The sooner we

understand and act on this, the closer we will be to establishing durable peace in the country.

Formal U.N. trusteeship

To put it bluntly, the Somali people deserve better than to have external parties micromanaging their internal affairs. But, until the current web of political confusion, frustration and exploitation is untangled, one approach is to be straight with the Somali people and to formalise the harmful practice that is currently in place.

As happened in East Timor and, to some extent, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Afghanistan, the U.S. and U.N. should seriously think about placing Somalia under some form of 'trusteeship'. If this is done, the current contest between the Ethiopian-controlled IGAD and U.S.-controlled U.N. will end. The Security Council could assign Somalia to one country - preferably a state like Turkey or China - which will then assist in rebuilding.

There are two benefits to such an arrangement.

Firstly, the Somali people will know when this trusteeship period will end and what the final result will be – a Somali-owned state. With the current arrangement, nobody knows when the de facto external control will come to an end and what the final outcome will be.

Secondly, any country tasked with assisting Somalia will have to be transparent and accountable to the Somali people and to the UN. There are already performance benchmarks in place for this.

Helping Somali institutions

Another option for the international community is to help existing Somali institutions to deliver context-appropriate and workable structures within a specified time and then provide them with the support they need. This would involve establishing new legal and governance structures, reducing the number of members of parliament (to between 120 and 160) and the number of people in government (to about 15 to 18 ministers), the separation of the executive and legislative branches and the introduction of a second chamber (of about 60 members) to represent the clans.

Once workable institutions are in place, the international community should give more support to Somalis than it provides to AMISOM.

Somalia is run by many masters, who have multiple and irreconcilable agendas. None of these have the support of the Somali people and none have been mandated by the UN to manage Somalia. This freewheeling and political exploitation must end.

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The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect Al Jazeera's editorial policy.

SIXTEEN) - BARROSO LEAPS TO DEFENCE OF EU FOREIGN CHIEF

We have two big EU chiefs who, when it comes to the policy on Libya and Gaddafi, are in direct contradiction with each other

Commission president José Manuel Barroso has made a robust defence of EU foreign affairs chief Catherine Ashton.

However, he conceded that there were "differences of opinion" between member states on the issue of military action in Libya.

He was responding to a fierce verbal attack on EU policy in Libya by Nigel Farage, leader of the UK Independence Party.

Speaking in Strasbourg during a question time session with Barroso, Farage said there had been a "contradiction" in the approach to the crisis adopted by Ashton and European council president Herman Van Rompuy.

Farage said "hardman" Van Rompuy had "made it clear" that the aim of the military intervention was "regime change", or the removal of Gaddafi.

Ashton, he said, had "contradicted" this in later statements.

"Here we have two big EU chiefs who, when it comes to the policy on Libya and Gaddafi, are in direct contradiction with each other," said Farage.

But Barroso hit back, saying, "There are some differences of opinion. That is the reality and you have to realise this. It was agreed at the last EU summit that Gaddafi should go but this is not the EU policy as such.

"But I want to stress that there is no contradiction."

Farage described Ashton as an "extreme left wing, ex-pacifist" who was "incompetent" in her job.

Even so, he said that "without Ashton", the EU's involvement in Libya "would be much deeper". Others have criticised Ashton since she was appointed to what is effectively the EU foreign minister's job. Barroso, however, went on to make a strong defence of the EU's high representative. The former Portuguese PM said, "She is a very committed European who is making an honest and determined contribution.

"It is a very challenging job which was previously done by three to four people." He said that even critics such as Farage "should give her the benefit of the doubt."

SEVENTEEN) - EGYPT: CRACKS APPEAR IN MUBARAK-ERA LABOUR BODY

The state-controlled trade union federation that for over half a century was employed by Egyptian rulers to suppress workers' protests and mobilise voters for sham elections appears to be crumbling with the recent ouster of President Hosni Mubarak.

"There is a movement against state control of unions," says Mohamed Trabelsi, a regional specialist on union activities at the International Labour Organisation (ILO). "You now have many strikes and labour protests in Egypt, and workers in many sectors have started to organise and form free and independent unions."

Until recently, all labour union activities and finance in Egypt fell under the umbrella of the Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF). Membership in the state-controlled body was mandatory for most public sector employees, and union dues were automatically deducted from their salaries.

Labour activists charge that Mubarak carefully orchestrated the federation's elections during his 30-year rule to ensure that union heads were loyal to the regime. ETUF in turn mobilised its four million members for pro-government rallies and bussed workers to polling stations during general elections to vote for the ruling party. It also suppressed strikes to ensure the state had a steady supply of cheap labour.

"Strikes were only allowed with ETUF permission, which was granted only once," explains Tamer Fathy, a spokesman for the Centre for Trade Union and Workers' Services (CTUWS). "The 2003 labour law improved things by allowing workers to strike under certain circumstances, but in practice (the criteria was) nearly impossible to fulfill."

Cracks had appeared in ETUF's authority even while Mubarak was in power. Now that he is gone, and his ruling party in tatters, angry workers are pressing to have the federation dissolved and its union heads held accountable.

Prosecutors are also investigating corruption allegations against ETUF president Hussein Megawer. Activists accuse him of misappropriating funds and misrepresenting workers. He is also under separate investigation for his alleged role in organising thugs to attack pro-democracy protesters in Cairo's Tahrir Square on Feb. 2. The official trade union federation's power has been on the wane since late 2006, when textile workers in the northern industrial town of Mahalla El-Kubra held a factory sit-in to protest unpaid bonuses. Since then, more than 3,000 labour protests have been organised across Egypt, involving over two million workers in nearly every sector.

In most instances, striking workers have demanded higher wages and better working conditions, as well as the removal of corrupt company managers.

Many workers also accuse ETUF union heads -- most of whom are high ranking members of Mubarak's National Democratic Party (NDP) -- of siding with the government and factory owners against them during labour protests, and have called for their impeachment. Their dissatisfaction with the state-backed federation prompted demands for independent unions that are accountable to their members.

Property tax collectors were the first to break from ETUF's sphere of influence, establishing the Real Estate Tax Authority Union (RETA) in early 2009, Egypt's first autonomous trade union since 1957. Their historic act, and struggle against ETUF reprisals and intimidation, encouraged workers in other sectors to follow suit.

"Workers have rejected the official trade federation because it has no credibility," said Fathy. "Its corrupt leadership served the regime (instead of workers) and its decisions came from the top down, not the reverse." Labour leaders recently announced the formation of the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (EFITU), a feisty rival to ETUF that groups the independent unions of property tax collectors, teachers, health technicians and pensioners. The upstart labour body claims to represent over 200,000 workers and has received thousands of membership requests from workers in various sectors.

"This is the time for organising strong, independent unions that are far from government influence and are fully democratic," says Fathy. "Workers want strong representation to be able to sit with their employers and negotiate for better wages and benefits."

Egypt's new labour minister, Ahmed El-Borai, is a legal expert on organised labour and a staunch supporter of independent unions. His appointment, which came after protesters adamantly rejected the previous

government's nomination of ETUF treasurer Ismail Fahmy, has cast doubts on ETUF's future. At a labour conference in March, El-Borai declared the inalienable right of workers to form independent labour unions and federations in accordance with international labour conventions that Egypt has ratified but long ignored. He said the government would neither interfere with the establishment of syndicates nor attempt to regulate their elections, finances and activities.

The minister also cancelled all state subsidies to ETUF, estimated at nearly 15 million U.S. dollar a year. He said workers should be free to choose their representation, and declared an end to the practice of deducting mandatory ETUF membership fees from employees' salaries.

In effect, the mammoth labour body must now rely on its ability to convince workers that their union dues will be well spent on defending their economic rights -- historically, a weak point for the organisation.

ETUF officials expect their embattled federation will weather the post-Mubarak storm, but sweeping changes in policy and leadership appear inevitable.

"The labour minister is not in a fight with the official (labour union) federation," says Shendy Abdallah, a vocational trainer at the Workers' Education Association, an ETUF subsidiary.

"But he is insisting that there should be multiple federations, and this will result in a conflict between them. In the long run, ETUF will need to change its public policy if it is to survive in this climate," adds Abdallah.

Given the pressure to reform, it appears unlikely that ETUF's leadership will remain in place until board elections, scheduled for November. Labour activists say no progress can be made until the regime loyalists are removed and a freely elected board is installed in their place.

EIGHTEEN) - EGYPT READY TO RE-ESTABLISH DIPLOMATIC TIES WITH IRAN

Cairo is ready to re-establish diplomatic ties with Tehran after a break of more than 30 years, Egypt's foreign minister said on Monday, signalling a shift in Iran policy since the fall of President Hosni Mubarak. "The Egyptian and Iranian people deserve to have mutual relations reflecting their history and civilisation," said Foreign Minister Nabil Elaraby after meeting Iranian official Mugtabi Amani. It was the first publicly announced meeting between officials from both countries since Mubarak was toppled on Feb. 11, handing power to the army. Shi'ite Muslim Iran and mainly Sunni Egypt severed ties in 1980 following Iran's Islamic revolution and Egypt's recognition of Israel. Both have competed for influence in the Middle East. Egypt has long been an ally of the United States and Israel but since Mubarak was toppled there have been signs of warming ties between Cairo and Tehran. "Egypt is open to all countries and the aim is to achieve common interests," Elaraby said, adding that Cairo welcomed "opening a new page with Iran". Amani carried a message from Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi, who welcomed Egypt's initiative. "Foreign Minister Salehi ... called for developing bilateral cooperation, beginning with hosting Egypt's foreign minister in Tehran or having Iran's foreign minister visit Cairo," Menha Bakhawm, spokeswoman for Egypt's foreign ministry, said in a statement. In February, two Iranian warships passed through Egypt's Suez Canal after approval from the military rulers in Cairo. Israel called Iran's move a provocation. Egypt and Iran have been at odds on a number of issues including the Middle East peace process and ties with Israel and the United States. (Reuters)

Fernando Matos Rosa

Brussels

