



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 11.01.2012  
C(2012) 54 final

*Dear President,*

*I would like to thank you for sending to the Commission the Opinion of the Italian Senate on the 8 March joint European Commission and High Representative Communication on the Southern Mediterranean {COM(2011) 200 final}, and apologise for the delay in responding.*

*Allow me to take this opportunity to once again reiterate the Commission's commitment to regular consultations with all EU national parliaments in order to guarantee the widest possible support for Union policies.*

*The developments we are now witnessing in a number of countries in North Africa and the Middle East are of historic proportion and represent a great challenge.*

*Across the region we have seen unprecedented expressions of popular will demanding self-determination, fundamental freedoms, civil and human rights, and a decent standard of living. They have forced us to take a very fresh look at our responsibilities and our responses.*

*The Commission fully shares the Senate's view on the importance of support for inclusive growth and economic development including trade facilitation.*

*Since the Senate's opinion was adopted, the Commission and the High Representative adopted, on 25 May, a Joint Communication on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy. This Communication aiming at a new level of commitment, particularly as regards stronger partnership with societies, greater differentiation, and being ready to go farther with our neighbours implementing ambitious political and economic reforms.*

*Economic and social challenges in our neighbourhood are immense. Our immediate objectives are creating jobs, boosting growth and improving social protection. Tackling these challenges is crucial to ensure the sustainability of political reforms.*

*Sen. Renato SCHIFANI  
Presidente  
Senato della Repubblica  
Piazza Madama, 1  
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*You will also have noted that since the Senate's opinion was adopted, the European Commission has put forward substantial proposals on mobility and migration.*

*Following endorsement by the Council and European Council, the Commission has already launched exploratory technical talks with Morocco, Egypt and Tunisia.*

*The European Commission also adopted, on 14 October, negotiating directives for deep and comprehensive Free Trade Areas with Morocco, Jordan, Egypt and Tunisia.*

*These are all areas where the support of Member States and of national parliaments will be crucial. I look forward to our fruitful cooperation in the future.*

*Yours faithfully,*

*Maroš Šefčovič  
Vice-President*