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By **Federico Grandesso**

Federico Grandesso talks to Italian MEP Pino Arlacchi and former vice-secretary general of the UN for a further update on the Bersani Coalition. The polls are now two weeks away in Italy.

Can you present some of the most important points in the programme of your coalition?

One of the most important points of our electoral programme is the fight to mafia and the reform of the Italian justice system. A system that satisfy the European standards means: strengthen the administration of civil and penal justice improving substantially its efficiency; reduce the length of the civil trials because now they can last up to ten years and finally bring to an end the grip of the mafias on the Italian society and economy. Our coalition has all the right ideas to succeed in these tasks. Another important topic for us is the fight against tax evasion and this means the recovery of financial resources that we could invest for the growth of the country and for the reduction of unemployment.

Few days ago Mr Berlusconi proposed not only to abolish the property tax (IMU) but even to reimburse it (the one paid last year). This IMU tax is monopolising the attention during this electoral campaign. What do you think about this proposal?□

I don't think that the Italian voters are going to be "seduced" by this proposal; it's an enormous lie from Berlusconi and I think it will backfire on him. According to the major pollsters the impact of this proposal is very low. But pollsters use to measure only the size of votes that are gained. They don't measure the loss of consensus that these ridiculous proposals can provoke on the voters. I think that not even Berlusconi's inner circle gives any credibility to such a proposal. In Italy more than 70% of the population owns its house. Having said that, our idea on this tax is that IMU must be paid only above the 500 euros. Most middle class and all working class family should be exempted from IMU.

In the Senate it will be very difficult for your coalition to have a majority, what do you think about a possible alliance with the coalition of Mr Monti?

I think this partnership will be necessary but also useful. There is only one major issue on which we deeply dissent from Monti: The issue of labour rights. We are a democratic and socialist party, associated with the European social democratic family. We are a worker's party. Many women and young people also vote for us because we are very close to their aspirations and rights. We will have 40% women among our next MEPs. Monti is a cold technocrat, with little sensitiveness for these social categories. Having said that, on almost all other crucial issues - the relations with EU, the fight to corruption, the reform of the State apparatus, the necessity to foster growth and competitiveness - our programmes are very similar.

In the electoral pools the third place is occupied by the Five Stars Movement of the famous comic performer Beppe Grillo, what do you think about him?

Beppe Grillo is part of a phenomenon that exists in all European countries, where you have a physiological 20% of "impossible" electorate: Extremists, populists, scovinists, racists, maverick characters that ignore democratic procedures. People that inflames for a while part of the public opinion and of the electorate, and vanish sometimes as quickly as they appeared. In Italy we had always this 20% of diehard voters. In the past they were neo-fascists or ultra-communists. Now we have the movement of Grillo, and the revolutionaries of Mr Ingroia and Mr Di Pietro (Rivoluzione civile), plus tiny extreme right formations.

You had a prominent role in the UN. What's the right way to manage the crisis in Mali?

First of all we have to replace the French troops with a UN peacekeeping force largely composed by African soldiers. UN can play a fundamental role to consolidate the democracy in Mali, which is still governed by a confused coalition. We need to support a process of democratic transition. But no durable peace can occur in Mali if the discrimination of the Tuareg population will continue to exist. Only through the acknowledgement of the Tuareg's right to autonomy and to a full citizenship a democratic Mali can survive and stabilise. This process will lead to the marginalization of the local mafias and terrorists groups.

Your coalition seems to suffer a sort of “fatigue”. Do you need a turning point?

Yes, I see a little bit of “fatigue” inside of coalition but I don't think that there are going to be real turning points. The current distance between the two main coalitions will remain as it is. Maybe we should have done a more courageous and high profile campaign, but it is too late to change.