Italy: National Representative

Confidential: for the assigned participant only. Do not share with other participants, including the other members of your delegation. Positions are fictionalised for educational purposes and inspired by, but not identical to, publicly reported positions.

The Council in this scenario. Seven member states sit at the table: Bulgaria, Slovakia, Germany, Italy, Poland, France and the United Kingdom (this is 2009; the UK is a member state). Each state has one vote, cast by its National Representative. A common position endorsing the protocol needs a **simplified qualified majority: at least five of the seven, including at least two of Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom** (the facilitator will state the numbers for the actual cast). The small states cannot carry a position without the big ones; the big ones cannot decide alone. If the threshold is met, the Czech Presidency signs on the Council's behalf. Member states may also conclude side agreements outside the protocol (bilateral or trilateral understandings); these should be written down and supported by the stakeholders involved, and they are published only after the scenario. The Commission does not vote during the negotiation, but it votes last, to support or sabotage the result. The Presidency chairs without voting.

Your delegation: Italy (2 members)

Italy is a major EU economy and a significant consumer of Russian gas (about 25 % of supply). Its national champion ENI has commercial ties with Gazprom going back to the 1960s, long-term contracts extended to 2035, and a 50–50 joint venture with Gazprom to build **South Stream**, a Black Sea route to Bulgaria and onward into Central Europe. The crisis has cut Italian supply moderately, but Italy has alternatives: Libyan, Algerian and Norwegian gas, LNG terminals. Italy is not in danger. Your instinct is commercial pragmatism: solve the problem, do not politicise it.

Key facts (all members):

- Dependency ~25 %; moderate impact, manageable; diversified supply.
- ENI–Gazprom partnership; South Stream co-developer.
- Traditionally good relations with Moscow regardless of political tensions.

Decision rule: Italy's National Representative casts the state's vote in the Council. Italy is one of the four big states whose votes the qualified majority requires.

Your role

Motivations & constraints: You are Italy's senior representative. Your approach is pragmatic and business-oriented: this is a commercial dispute, solve it commercially; grand declarations about solidarity and energy independence are nice but do not turn the gas back on. Your aims: a quick resolution (every day of crisis is market instability and political noise, so push for any reasonable deal, fast); protect ENI's Gazprom relationship and South Stream (multi-billion-euro investments no EU action should jeopardise); support Germany's cautious approach (you are natural allies, both with deep Gazprom ties, both against binding solidarity); and avoid an anti-Russian EU posture (Russia is a key partner for Italy regardless of political weather).

Red lines: No EU action that threatens ENI's contracts or South Stream. No binding solidarity mechanism that could force Italy to redirect its diversified supply to countries that failed to plan.

Style: In plenary, be the voice of commercial pragmatism: "let's focus on solutions, not blame: what do Russia and Ukraine need to restart the gas?" Coordinate with Germany on the cautious line; engage Russia supportively; if ENI's ideas can help, offer them on commercial terms. With Bulgaria, your South Stream partner, be sympathetic and careful: show support, commit to nothing you do not want. Your vote is one of the big four the Council majority needs; use that quietly.

Confidential (for you alone, not for your delegation): ENI's chief executive has been in direct contact with Gazprom throughout the crisis, offering to help broker commercial terms, and ENI has even floated the idea that a consortium of European utilities could finance the technical gas to restart transit. Italy has connections and ideas that could resolve this: on commercial terms, not political ones. You also know Russia's pipeline strategist will approach you about South Stream, and you are fully receptive: it is in Italy's commercial interest and the crisis strengthens the case. But, like Germany with Nord Stream, be discreet while Bulgaria and Slovakia are suffering. Your energy adviser will push you to be slightly more EU-minded than your instinct; they are not wrong that appearing purely self-interested is a bad look. Consider allowing some modest gestures (verbal sympathy, support for monitoring, a vague commitment to "review energy security") as long as they constrain neither ENI nor South Stream.