REMARKS

by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton at the Asia-Europe meeting (ASEM) in New Delhi

"It's a great pleasure to be here in New Delhi, to address the ASEM Ministerial meeting on the issue of non-traditional security challenges. This is a concern for us all, and I strongly believe that the partnership we are building in the framework of ASEM carries a huge potential for great partnership, often devising conflicts.

Scarcity, fluctuations, management of global water resources need to move higher up the multilateral agenda. I say that on behalf of the European Union, where we are a land of shared waters. 60% of the EU's territory lies in trans-boundary river basins. Water diplomacy has become part of the work of the EU foreign ministers and I believe that we have much we can do to share experience between us all, especially because we have experience we gained with water management in the Danube or Rhine basin.

Chairman, you raised as well the issue of cyber security. I reflect very often on the positive role that the internet has played in terms of freedom of association and expression and the role of social media in some of the areas of our neighbourhood, for example in Tunisia or Egypt. We're also of course very conscious of the negative aspects - viruses and cyber-crime - and the use of the internet to attack some of the most vulnerable people in our society, especially children.
So getting the right kind of security strategy is really important - we need to see the promotion of our EU values online, but we also have to have cyber space free and open, with freedom of expression and association and other human rights applied. We will increase our assistance and capacity building to developing countries so that we close the digital divide as discussed at the cyber space conference in October in Seoul.

I also want to touch upon one of the most pressing and difficult questions, which is the rise of terrorism and radicalization and the work that we have to do to combat them. I think of the attacks that have taken place in Algeria and in Nairobi and sadly many others. We need to be clear about our counter terrorism strategies and to ensure that part of them is countering extremism, that we stop people becoming radicalized and becoming terrorists.

We have a radicalization awareness network which is set up to respond to new threats and we work closely with countries that have expertise in the prevention of radicalization. I refer especially at the moment to Jordan who has an extremely interesting program that I have been looking at very closely.

We also have to think about foreign fighters - those who go to conflict zones in order to fight and then return home perhaps further radicalized and acting as catalysts for terrorism in their home countries. We are keen to share with everyone the results of the work that we have done either bilaterally or through for example the Global Counter Terrorism Forum. And it’s important to do that from an approach that is based on the rule of law and the respect of the human rights.

Of course our thoughts are very much with the Philippines and the people of the Philippines this week. If ever there is an example of the devastation of natural disasters, we see that there. Our thoughts are with them. Our resources needed to be put at their disposal and the European Union will play its part. We know as well that natural disasters don’t stop at the borders and the people who are most affected are always the most vulnerable.

Typically investments on risk management multiply by more than four times the benefits on trying to deal with disasters before they happen. So I think we have more to do through our development cooperation to help to invest in prevention, mitigation and preparedness. That would help us deal better in the future with the consequences of natural and of course occasionally artificially made disasters.

We want to work closely with Asean and with individual countries in the region. We’ve already provided over 50 million euros to help victims of natural disasters, and are working together with Asean on a regional network of information sharing and early warning systems for emergency situations as we discussed in Brunei last July.

One of the other areas that again is becoming something that we are very conscious of in the European Union is the way that organised crime is been used, especially for trafficking of human beings, effectively slavery of our own time. Refugees from conflicts in the search of peace - although simply looking for a better life - often fall to criminals and organised crime who traffic people to other countries; women are of course the largest victims.
We've seen that recently in the Mediterranean. It's unacceptable to all of us that we see thousands of people, some of them will die trying, to enter our borders in the most terrible way. So we have to look at the protection of victims and the prosecution of criminals and that means working together to try and achieve a way forward that can recognize that we have to deal with a complex transnational problem. In other words - to find ways to prevent or deal with conflicts and to help countries to be more able to protect the vulnerable in their societies.

Thank you."