STATEMENT

by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the extremely grave situation in the Central African Republic

The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the Commission, issued the following statement today:

"I am alarmed by the deteriorating situation in Bangui and the escalation of violence there since March 22.

The combined action of the African force MISCA and the French operation Sangaris is essential to contain the tension and to restore public order as soon as possible. The attacks against them are therefore unacceptable. I reiterate the full support of the European Union to MISCA and Sangaris and to their efforts to stabilize the Central African Republic.

The violence must stop and all civilians must be protected. The transitional authorities of the Central African Republic must be supported in their fight against impunity and in their efforts to promote dialogue and mediation initiatives.

I strongly condemn the targeted killings of civilians on the basis of religion and ethnicity. I am particularly alarmed by the vulnerability of minorities who are increasingly victims of retaliation. And I am concerned by the continuing exodus of parts of the population and the large number of refugees heading to neighbouring countries where facilities are stretched to the limit.
The situation in the Central African Republic presents a growing risk to the political transition process, the territorial integrity of the country and to the stability of the Central African region.

The international community must act swiftly to prevent further bloodshed in the Central African Republic. The European Union intends to take its part in these efforts to bring back stability and security in Bangui and the rest of the country."