Declaration by High Representative Catherine Ashton on behalf of the European Union on political prisoners in Eritrea

The European Union remains deeply concerned about the detention, since September 2001, of a group of eleven Members of Parliament and of the People's Front for Democracy and Justice, along with ten independent journalists. Very little is known on their health conditions. They are facing unlawful, incommunicado detention, without having been charged with any offence, in total contradiction with Eritrea’s international human rights obligations.

The European Union is deeply concerned about recent unconfirmed reports that some of these persons could have died in detention. It calls on the Eritrean authorities to make public all information on the whereabouts of the political prisoners and to allow them access to their families and lawyers.

The European Union firmly calls for the unconditional release of these prisoners, and of all other persons detained for having peacefully expressed their views. The European Union further deplores the persistent violation by Eritrea of its obligations, under domestic and international law, despite the repeated appeals by the international community.
The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* and Iceland†, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and the EFTA countries Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

† Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area."