Remarks made by High Representative Catherine Ashton at the High Level Meeting on the Flood Emergency in Pakistan, New York, 19 September

On behalf of the European Union, I would like to express my deepest sympathy to the people and government of Pakistan over the devastating floods which have afflicted your country.

We understand that the cost to Pakistan’s economy will be immense. I believe that the severity of this crisis demands an immediate and substantial response, taking into account the importance of Pakistan’s development, security and stability.

The EU responded swiftly and generously. Our common contribution to the humanitarian aid efforts presently stands at more than €240 million ($315 million) (Member States and Commission combined in cash and kind). This alone represents more than 60% of the initial UN appeal. It is a reflection of the EU’s solidarity with Pakistan in these challenging times. We have taken good note of the revised appeal issued on Friday.

We see the need for a comprehensive package of short, medium and longer term measures which will help Pakistan’s recovery and future development. This was discussed at the European Heads of State and Government last Thursday, and leaders agreed that this should comprise significant additional humanitarian and development assistance as well as ambitious trade measures.

In light of the situation in Pakistan, and the need to strengthen Pakistan’s economy, the EU has already started consulting with its partners in WTO to seek a waiver allowing us to significantly reduce trade tariffs for key exports from Pakistan to the EU. I appeal to all members of WTO to
take a generous approach to this request, and to consider similar steps themselves, so that Pakistan’s economy can recover quickly.

I welcome IMF’s announcement of additional $450 million loan in emergency assistance and the disaster needs assessment underway by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. I would advocate that we also need a Post Disaster Needs Assessment with a broader scope, to which the EU would be ready to contribute.

A number of other events are coming up which will further define the response of the international community – FM Qureshi and I will co-host a “Friends of Democratic Pakistan” Ministerial in Brussels on 15 October which will in particular look at wider policy issues in relation to the floods, in preparation for the Pakistan Development Forum in Islamabad in November.

The European Union reiterates its intention to strengthen the EU’s strategic dialogue with Pakistan and to work together towards a stable, democratic and prosperous Pakistan.

We understand how important it is for Pakistan’s civilian authorities, at both national and provincial level, to deliver the services which the Pakistani people expect at such a moment, and we are ready to do what we can to help. It will require a sustainable engagement, covering not just short-term relief but also governance reform and institution building.

A strong, reform-minded government of Pakistan, able to deliver basic services, ensure security, protect investments and uphold human rights is the best defence against extremism and social tensions, and the best means towards rapid recovery and reconstruction.