Statement by Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, on the resignation of the Tunisian Prime Minister

Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, made today the following statement:

"I take note of the decision to resign taken by Tunisian Prime Minister M. Ghannouchi. I commend his sense of responsibility, so as to avoid further violence. I hope that his decision will prevent any further tension and will allow the present transition phase to proceed in a peaceful and stable way.

In this context, I want to welcome the quick announcement by the Tunisian authorities of a new Prime Minister in Beji Caid Sebsi and I am also encouraged that elections will take place before mid July. It is important that a democratically elected government emerges from these elections to address the political, economic and social challenges faced by the country. The EU is assisting Tunisia at its request in the organization of the upcoming elections.

The transitional government must ensure a rapid and smooth transition. The objective is a lasting transformation that delivers deep democracy and full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The future lies firmly in the hands of the Tunisian people."

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