Statement by the spokesperson of High Representative Catherine Ashton on artillery attack on civilians in a market in Abidjan

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

Yesterday, security forces loyal to the incumbent president, Laurent Gbagbo, launched a heavy artillery attack on innocent civilians in a market in Abidjan. The High Representative condemns in the strongest possible terms this criminal attack, which claimed the lives of more than 25 people and wounding 40-60 others. This marks a steep escalation of violence, in stark contrast with last week's decision of the African Union which reaffirmed the victory of President Ouattara.

The High Representative is deeply concerned about the escalating violence and urges all parties to refrain from violence against civilians and for Laurent Gbagbo to transfer power immediately to the President elect.

The High Representative is committed to working with the international community to ensure that those responsible for such killings and other human rights abuses inflicted upon the civilian population will be identified and held accountable for their crime including at the international level. The United Nations have already warned that the recent killings could constitute crimes against humanity.