Statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton on the sentences of seven former Bahá’í leaders in Iran

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

"I am disturbed by recent information that the original 20-year prison sentences against seven former Bahá’í leaders may have been reinstated. This comes just six months after Iran's appeal court decided to reduce their sentences to 10 years. I call on the Iranian authorities to clarify the legal situation of the seven individuals concerned. They and their lawyers should be given the requisite access to all relevant documentation regarding their cases.

In line with its previous Declarations of 12 January and 12 August 2010 on the trial and sentencing of the seven former Bahá’í leaders, the EU recalls that freedom of thought, conscience and religion are fundamental rights which must be guaranteed under all circumstances according to article 18 of the ICCPR which the Islamic Republic of Iran has acceded to.

I therefore call on the Iranian authorities to immediately release the seven Bahá’í leaders, whose sentencing appears to be motivated by their belonging to a minority faith, and to put an end to the persecution of religious minorities in Iran."

FOR FURTHER DETAILS:
Michael Mann +32 498 999 780 - +32 2 299 97 80 - Michael.Mann@ec.europa.eu
Maja Kocijancic +32 498 984 425 - +32 2 298 65 70 - Maja.Kocijancic@ec.europa.eu
COMM-SPP-HRVP-ASHTON@ec.europa.eu
www.eeas.europa.eu