Statement by the High Representative on presidential elections in Kazakhstan

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

"I congratulate the people of Kazakhstan for exercising their democratic rights in presidential elections on April 3.

I take note of the preliminary findings and conclusions of the OSCE / ODIHR International Election Observation Mission on the Presidential elections in Kazakhstan, stating that while the elections were technically well administered, reforms necessary for holding genuine democratic elections have yet to materialize. OSCE /ODIHR also highlighted that although the media provided more equality in covering candidates in the news programmes, important shortcomings remain in freedom of expression and media.

I call on the Kazakhstani authorities to effectively address these shortcomings, as well as other restrictions and irregularities observed by the OSCE/ODIHR. This should be done before the legislative elections in 2012, in order to ensure that they are in line with international standards.
I also encourage the Kazakhstani authorities to enhance their efforts to honour their international commitments regarding democratic principles and human rights, particularly measures related to the registration of political parties, the decriminalization of defamation and the freedom of assembly. These are key to ensure Kazakhstan’s increased compliance with accepted democratic standards, as a country that is a member of the OSCE and is committed to the common values of rule of law based democracies.

Kazakhstan is a key partner for the EU, and we stand ready to continue our support to the implementation of further political reforms."