Statement by the spokesperson of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on Arbitrary Arrests in Sudan

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

> On 8 November 2010, the High Representative issued a statement condemning the arbitrary arrests of thirteen journalists of Radio Dabanga. These arrests appeared to be part of a broader picture of harassment and intimidation of Sudanese civil society actors.

The EU continues to receive reports of opposition party members, human rights defenders, journalists, university students, minors and ordinary citizens being arbitrarily arrested and detained, in the absence of basic judicial guarantees and without a proper accountability system being in place.

Respect for the rule of law, freedom of expression and tolerance of divergent views are critical attributes of democratic governance. The EU welcomes the recent release of some opposition party members and encourages the Government of Sudan to release all political detainees or to have them charged and brought to justice in accordance with due process of law.

The EU hopes that the spirit of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement will continue after 9 July 2011 and urges the Government of Sudan to build the foundations of the new state on democratic and fundamental human rights principles, as already enshrined in the Interim National Constitution of 2005, and to ensure that appropriate structures are put in place to uphold those commitments.«