 Remarks by the High Representative upon arrival to the Foreign Affairs Council, Brussels, 18 July

I arrived here from Cortenbergh where I have just opened our new Situation Room. This is a good example of bringing together the different resources from different parts of the European Union institutions so that we can not only monitor what is happening, but we can support our missions and delegations more effectively. It is a good example too of cost effectiveness, because it didn't cost a single euro more.

At Foreign Affairs Council today we will be discussing amongst other important issues the Middle East Peace Process. I will be reporting back from the Quartet meeting in Washington last week, we will be of course reflecting again on our Southern neighbourhood. I participated at the Contact Group meeting on Libya last Friday and we will be discussing Syria and other issues of the region: growing concern about the levels of violence, making sure that our response to the people of Egypt and Tunisia is as good as it can be, the new Task Force to be set up with Bernardino Leon, who is our Special Representative to that area and starts work this week. He will be soon going to Egypt and Tunisia.

Over lunch, we will look at Afghanistan and Pakistan, very important countries and important issues to be debated about how we make sure we are supporting the people of Afghanistan into the future. Also in case of Pakistan we have a lot of developments and need to think about how we further develop relationship with Pakistan at what is probably a crucial time for them.

On Syria, the European Union has already reacted strongly. We have a delegation still on the ground that are working with local people, that are talking to as many people as they possibly can, I have been in touch with the Foreign Affairs Minister. We have done our demarches, we are working with our Members States and the Security Council which is of course a really important part of what we do and discussing with the United States, keeping the pressure on. We have been in touch with Turkey, discussing with them how to support the refugees who are coming over the border.
We have made it absolutely clear that we think this violence has to stop immediately and the dialogue - which I had hoped was going to be real, but clearly isn't due to the lack of involvement of the opposition groups - should get going.

On the freeze of Libyan assets, it is up to Member States to look at how best they can support the people of Libya. You will know that at the Contact Group, the United States decided to recognise the Transitional National Council. I think that they will then be able to support them in other ways. And Member States are looking at what they can do.

The Contact Group is an important place where all of those engaged in trying to support the people of Libya come together. What was important about last Friday was the beginning of thinking about what we will do in the post-Kadhafi world and how we make sure that we are collaborating better to offer that support. For me, one of the big and important issues over the last few weeks has been to make sure that we have got a plan between all of those of us who are engaged in this, under UN leadership. We are trying to make sure that we have a supportive approach to the United Nations and UNSG Special Envoy for Libya, making sure that we have got support and planning in place: humanitarian aid, logistical support, support on security and so on, also through our Benghazi office who have to be able to move further forward on that.

On Middle East Peace Process and Palestine statehood - we don't know yet what the resolution will be. Not surprisingly, we are in touch with the Palestinians, to discuss with them what is happening. We are still working within the Quartet to see whether we can pull together a statement. It is not easy because the purpose of this statement is to get the talks going again, so it needs to be very inclusive.

As we said in Washington, it is very complicated to pull together a statement that will support both sides back into talks. My ambition is to get talks moving and to get a real solution for the people in Palestine and prosperity in Israel.