Statement by
EU High Representative Catherine Ashton
following the conference call of the Cairo Group

The "Cairo Group" – representatives of the United Nations, the African Union, the Arab League, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the European Union – held today a videoconference to discuss the developing situation in Libya under the chairmanship of UN Secretary General Ban ki-Moon. The EU was represented by High Representative Catherine Ashton, who issued a following statement afterwards.

"Libya is now embarking on an historic transition process that should be based upon the respect for democratic values and human rights. Colonel Kadhafi must avoid further bloodshed by relinquishing power and calling on those forces that continue to fight to lay down their arms and protect civilians.

Today, under UN leadership, we agreed to call on all parties to respect international humanitarian and international human rights obligations. There should be no reprisals.

We all emphasized that the transition in Libya should be Libyan-led and inclusive. All partners should respect Libyan leadership and sovereignty. Every effort must be made to promote reconciliation. As I discussed with Mr. Jalil, President of the National Transitional Council earlier this week, reaching out now to political forces across the country is key for a successful transition.

We confirmed our determination to support the Libyan people at this crucial moment but also in the medium and long term. Now the priority is to provide immediate assistance for the most urgent needs in the public services, particularly medical supplies, water and fuel. The restoration of public order and security is also essential to start building a free and united Libya. I underlined the need for early decisions at the United Nations to unfreeze Libyan assets blocked abroad.

Our discussion focused on the plans to support the new Libya and the National Transitional Council. We agreed to continue to coordinate our assistance and planning under strong UN leadership to make sure we are fast and effective in responding to the Libyan needs."

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