Statement by the spokesperson of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the sentences on Iranian Filmmaker Jafar Panahi and Iranian Actress Marzieh Vafamehr

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

"High Representative Catherine Ashton was disturbed to learn of the 6-year prison sentence, confirmed after appeal, imposed on the prominent Iranian filmmaker Jafar Panahi. The High Representative is also very concerned at the sentence of one year’s imprisonment and 90 lashes given to prominent actress Marzieh Vafamehr, following her part in a film referring to the difficult conditions in which artists operate in Iran.

The High Representative calls on Iran immediately to review both sentences and to put an end to the persecution – whether by detention or other forms of harassment - of these and other members of its artistic community. Such treatment is incompatible with the international human rights principles that Iran has freely signed up to: the use of corporal punishment - which amounts to torture - is incompatible with article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The right to freedom of expression through art and writing, is enshrined in Article 19 of the same Covenant."