EU High Representative Catherine Ashton visits Tripoli and opens European Union Delegation

Brussels, 12 November 2011 - Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Commission Vice-President, will visit Tripoli today, to officially inaugurate the new Delegation of the European Union in Libya. She will meet the Chairman of the National Transitional Council, Mustafa Abdul Jalil, newly appointed Prime Minister, Abdrarrahim al-Keib, and Ian Martin, the head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya. She will also speak at the first Libyan Women's Rights Forum.

"I am delighted to visit Tripoli to express the EU's continued support to the Libyan people's efforts to build a new Libya based on the rule of law, democracy and human rights," Catherine Ashton said. "Opening a fully fledged EU Delegation in Tripoli underlines the EU's commitment to our close relationship with the Libyan people, both during the political transition and in the long term. I will meet representatives of civil society organisations at the Women's Rights Forum. The EU is already supporting civil society in Libya, in particular women and young people, who have a major role to play in shaping Libya's future."

Catherine Ashton opened an EU office in Benghazi on 22 May. She sent a team to Tripoli on 31 August, after the capital was liberated, to prepare for the opening of an EU Delegation. Since the beginning of the crisis, the EU has provided more than €155 million in humanitarian support and mobilised EU civil protection teams and assets to alleviate the plight of civilians both in Libya and at its borders.
In addition, the European Commission is making some €30 million available to support the immediate stabilisation priorities of the National Transitional Council (NTC). A further €50 million will be available for longer-term support programmes based on needs assessments to be carried out shortly. As agreed at the international conference in Paris on 2 September 2011, the EU is preparing to launch assessments in communications, civil society, and border management. It has already deployed experts in these fields as well as in security and procurement.

Catherine Ashton will officially open the EU Delegation at 12.00 local time on Saturday. A press point will be held following her meeting with Chairman Jalil at the NTC headquarters (at 14.15 local time).

Full coverage of EUHR visit to Tripoli will be available later today on:
Europe by Satellite: http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/ebs/schedule.cfm
Council TVnewsroom: http://tvnewsroom.consilium.europa.eu
All news on Libya: http://eeas.europa.eu/libya/index_en.htm

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For more information see annex
EU support to Libya

From the start of the Libyan crisis, the EU has stood by the people of Libya in their quest for freedom. Together with the international community, it will continue to help Libya's process of democratic transition and economic reconstruction.

The broad, comprehensive and swift response of the EU covers a wide range of short- to long-term actions.

Humanitarian assistance

The EU is the biggest humanitarian donor in this crisis: it provided approximately €155 million in humanitarian support, with €80.5 million coming from the EU budget. Since the beginning of the crisis, the European Commission's humanitarian teams have been working on the ground with humanitarian partners to ensure that priority needs are met and aid is adequately coordinated both in Libya and in neighbouring countries. The EU has also mobilised EU civil protection teams and assets to alleviate the plight of civilians both in Libya and at its borders.

Support to the democratic transition and economic development

Following the setting up of a Liaison Office in Benghazi (22 May) designed to coordinate Member State activities and give immediate support to the National Transitional Council and civil society, an EU office was also opened in Tripoli shortly after the city was liberated. The Tripoli office has now been upgraded into the Delegation of the EU in Libya. This represents both a political symbol and a necessary step to allow the EU to provide effective support for the Libyan transition.

Beyond tackling the most pressing humanitarian needs, the EU is already preparing both immediate measures to support the stabilisation priorities of the National Transitional Council (NTC), as well as longer-term support programmes. It was agreed at the international conference in Paris on 2 September 2011 that the EU will conduct needs assessment for the following sectors: border management; strengthening civil society and women’s rights, and media/strategic communications, while the UN and the World Bank, with which the EU is working very closely, will lead assessments in other areas. In addition, the EU has already deployed experts in communications, civil society, border management and security, and procurement.

In addition to its humanitarian assistance, the European Commission can make up to €30 million available for immediate stabilisation needs, including through the re-activation of programmes in the field of migration that were suspended when conflict began. Building on activities already underway with the NTC and civil society groups (initially launched in the Benghazi area), this includes:

- Short-term technical assistance to the NTC to build up state institutions;
- Strengthening respect for human rights and democratisation;
- Strengthening civil society and re-building of livelihoods through civil society;
- Health: support for urgent needs resulting from the conflict;
- Education: to promote quality education in a conducive child friendly environment, with focus on the most vulnerable children;
- Migration: support to issues related to displaced people and border controls;
- Security sector.
The European Commission is ready to refocus available €50 million foreseen for the period 2012-2013 on the needs of the new Libyan authorities in areas such as democratisation and civil society, public administration capacity building and social and economic development. This longer-term support programme will be prepared together with the new Libyan authorities.

Libya is a resource-rich country. In parallel with assistance, the EU has started to lift restrictions on a range of economic entities which, previously under the control of the regime, were subject to sanctions. This will contribute to the resumption of normal economic activity.

Towards a long lasting partnership

The EU also stands ready to resume negotiations on a Framework Agreement which can serve as a basis for political, economic, social and cultural dialogue and cooperation with the new Libya, whenever the new authorities decide that is the right moment to do so. The same principle applies to the possibility of having Libya joining regional initiatives where the EU is involved.

The developments in Libya are giving fresh momentum to the Arab Spring. The European Union stands by the people in the region and supports their democratic aspirations and choices. This is reflected in the Communication of the Commission and the High Representative 'A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity' (8 March 2011), which lays the foundation on which that support will be built in coming years, as well as in their Communication 'A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood" which gives orientations of the new European Neighbourhood Policy (25 May 2011).

For more information:
10/10/2011 - Council conclusions on Libya:
22/09/2011 - EU implements latest UN decisions in support of Libya:
01/09/2011 - Q/A: The European Commission’s humanitarian assistance in Libya:
MEMO/11/572
All news on Libya: http://eeas.europa.eu/libya/index_en.htm