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

"Today is the 62nd anniversary of the Schuman Declaration.

Every year we celebrate Europe Day by looking back at the history of European integration and the things we have accomplished together.

But it should also be an opportunity to look forward.

We read a lot in the press about the financial crisis and the economic problems we are facing. But the basis of the European economy remains strong. And the common values that bring us together are more important than ever.

The coming year will be crucial for Europe's recovery – and for Europe's future. Not only the steps we take internally in the European Union on the economy and with Croatia joining in July 2013.

But also how we engage globally.

Europe has always been outward looking and open. We have consistently influenced the way the world thinks – about trade, the environment, climate change, the death penalty, the International Criminal Court, and many other important issues.

I am convinced that Europe must remain actively engaged around the world. And equally that our international work can help to underpin our economic recovery.
There has been a lot of progress since we marked Schuman Day last year.

We are building up the European External Action Service, including a fully joined up Crisis management system so that we can deliver comprehensive solutions on the ground, be it in Libya or Somalia or Afghanistan.

I have travelled to many countries and regions – visiting every continent including a striking trip to the Arctic.

Everywhere I go, I take a message on behalf of Europe, about 27 countries working together to help solve problems.

Everywhere I go, I hear that others from outside Europe want to work with a Europe that is active and committed.

So that is what I intend to do.

In short, we will continue to do what the framers of the Lisbon Treaty -- and long before them, Robert Schuman -- intended; for Europe to play an active role in solving global problems.

There is much we have achieved in the past year; but even more to be done."

Video in Digital file format:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FivzolhGJF8&list=UUxHThrSvr-fQFJsFpsKcpw&feature=plcp

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