Statement by the Spokesperson of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the situation in Mali

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

“Following the statement on Mali by the EU Council on 23 April, the High Representative is concerned about the continuing failure to restore a legitimate and constitutional civilian government.

In line with the agreement originally reached with ECOWAS, it is essential that the military return to barracks and allow the transitional civilian authorities to manage the re-establishment of administration and preparation for elections. Their failure to do so puts at risk the restoration of normal relations with the country, the resumption of development assistance, and the commencement of a negotiation process to restore the territorial integrity of the country with the reestablishment of legitimate government in the north.

The EU reaffirms its support for the efforts by ECOWAS to ensure a peaceful and constitutional political transition in the south and, in cooperation with other members of the international community, to find a resolution to the turmoil in the north. The High Representative is ready to consider targeted sanctions against those obstructing the transition if this becomes necessary.

EU development assistance to the government will remain suspended until legitimate government is restored, although direct and humanitarian assistance to the people will continue in order to support their needs.

The EU is particularly concerned that the current stalemate and continued control of northern regions by rebel forces is preventing the delivery of essential humanitarian assistance to the population there. It is aggravating the already severe food crisis, and forcing hundreds of thousands of Malian citizens to flee their homes and seek safety, shelter and sustenance elsewhere. The High Representative therefore calls on all parties to open humanitarian corridors that will allow the necessary aid to reach those in need.”