Remarks by High Representative Catherine Ashton at the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum Ministerial, Istanbul, 7 June 2012

Thanks to Foreign Minister Ahmed Davutoglu as co-chair and host and to Hillary Clinton for co-chairing this event. Since its launch in New York last September, the EU has been a strong supporter of the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum. And we are very happy to see Turkey take on a leading role in giving the GCTF a permanent home.

As we see here today, this brings together a diverse group of countries. But what unites us is our determination to step up our collaboration and achieve a more effective international effort to prevent and fight terrorism. And also a desire to increase mutual understanding and trust. Both these objectives are important. I want to reaffirm the commitment of the European Union to tackle terrorist groups worldwide, and that includes the PKK.

I am just coming from Pakistan and I want to once again thank my host, Minister Khar for her hospitality but also for the work we were able to do. We agreed amongst many things closer cooperation on counter-terrorism, in particular to deepen the criminal justice and rule of law approach on counter-terrorism.

Looking at the agenda, the common promotion and application of a criminal justice and rule of law approach on tackling terrorism is one of the fundamental concepts in this forum.

As we see from today’s agenda, the forum already has many great achievements and not least in getting the working groups up and running.
We are very proud to co-chair the working group on the Horn of Africa with Turkey. Together we hosted one event in Tanzania this February and will do so again in the region later this year.

I want to congratulate the working groups – chairs and members – for their productive work. We particularly welcome the adoption of the two good practice documents.

We also appreciate very much the strong link between the Forum and the United Nations. It is important to us in the European Union that this work takes place in the context of the UN Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

And we believe this is the case. We are happy to see the work contribute to the review of the UN Global Strategy of 2006.

Quite rightly, this Forum addresses the issue too of victims of terrorism. I am happy to announce that we will be supporting a conference on this in Madrid in July 2012. We also believe that security is always closely linked to democracy and functioning institutions. Governance, the rule of law and a functioning criminal justice system are critical to success. We also need to look beyond governments and involve parliaments, civil society, social networks, journalists, women's organisations and youth organisations. It is in this spirit that we warmly welcome the work on countering violent extremism, and the establishment of an International Centre in Abu Dhabi. I congratulate the United Arab Emirates for its work.

We will fully support this initiative and will share our experience in the Radicalisation Awareness Network. This network was launched by Commissioner Malmström on 9 September 2011 and a major follow-up conference is planned for this autumn. We hope many of you will come.

Of course we need to strengthen our political dialogue on counter-terrorism. We have specific counter-terrorism consultations now with 40 countries.

As you know we are a provider in capacity building world-wide, and we have increased our commitment since 2009 - sharing the experience of our 27 Member States globally.

Over the last ten years, we have supported 160 countries worldwide, with some €5 billion in funding to assist in establishing the rule of law, good governance, justice and security. Our assistance addresses the nexus between development and security. We believe it is in vital to pursue this support, and long-term comprehensive commitments from this meeting as we go forward.

As regards the proposals on the table today, we are very pleased to announce that we will continue and enhance our capacity building efforts. Under new and existing resources, we will be able to support projects with specific focus on rule of law, criminal justice and preventive measures, worth approximately € 30 million.
We also would like to welcome the proposal to establish a Justice and Rule of Law Training Institute and to say that we have identified significant resources to support this project, and we of course hope that others will be able to do the same.

As a close partner of Tunisia, we are delighted to see our colleague the Tunisian Foreign Minister here and to congratulate him on the work done and to offer our support for the work to come.

Thank you again to the co-hosts for this extremely important meeting.