Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, and Karel De Gucht, EU Commissioner for Trade, made today the following statement:

"We welcome the decision by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to suspend their resolution against Myanmar/Burma condemning labour practices in the country. This decision follows an assessment by the ILO which recognises the important efforts made recently by the authorities there in respect of work-related legislation. The EU fully recognises the importance of the ILO report and considers this a positive step forward in the process of the re-instatement of preferential market access for Myanmar/Burmese products to the European market to boost their economy and provide vital economic support to their people at this time. We are studying the ILO report carefully and, on this basis, the EU hopes to be able to put forward a legislative proposal on the re-instatement of Myanmar/Burma to the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP). In this light, we recall that the EU has consistently called for responsible investment and bilateral trade as crucial elements for helping the country recover and flourish. Furthermore, the EU Council of Ministers has expressed its strong support for re-instating preferential market access for Myanmar products to the European market. We warmly welcome the comments yesterday of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in her speech at the ILO conference in which she has shared this view."