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Statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton on the recent violent attacks in Nigeria

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

“I am appalled by the terrible attacks perpetrated against Christian churches in Nigeria on 17 June, following several similar attacks in recent weeks. I also deeply regret that reprisal attacks appear to have been made against members of the Muslim community. I condemn all such violence that leads to the loss of innocent lives, and expresses my sincere condolences to the victims and their families.

Nigeria’s Constitution protects the freedom of belief and religion. Through the human rights dialogue that exists between the EU and Nigeria, which also covers issues related to the freedom of belief and religion, we will explore ways that the EU can support the Government’s efforts to bring greater understanding between the various religious communities through wider dialogue, in order to prevent such atrocities happening again.

At the same time it is important that those responsible for this terrible loss of life should be brought to trial and, if found guilty, be punished.

The EU will renew its efforts in cooperation with the government and people of Nigeria to address the underlying social and economic problems in the north of the country, and work with the authorities to make the fight against terrorism more effective.”