High Representative Catherine Ashton travels to Asia

Catherine Ashton, the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission, travels to China today for the first leg of a five-day mission to Asia. Catherine Ashton will be in Beijing for the third round of the EU-China Strategic Dialogue on 9-10 July before travelling to Hong Kong for bilateral meetings on 11 July. She will then travel to Cambodia where she will participate in the 19th ASEAN Regional Forum (12 July) in Phnom Penh. On 13 July she will travel to Siem Reap to visit EU-funded projects in the north west of Cambodia, before addressing the Lower Mekong Women's Policy Dialogue.

On the eve of her mission Catherine Ashton said: "Our relations with Asia are of global consequence and, needless to say, of the utmost importance to the European Union. I am looking forward to this trip as an opportunity to deepen our strategic engagement and to strengthen these relations. Our partnership with China is one of interdependent equals who share broad common interests and we have an obligation to engage on a wide range of global issues. In Hong Kong I look forward to political and economic discussions with a significant trade and investment partner.

The European Union is also stepping up its support for regional integration in this diverse and dynamic part of the world. European experience and our point of view in this regard will form part of my talks in Cambodia at the ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum) where the key political and security issues facing the region will be discussed."

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In China, the High Representative will co-chair the Third EU-China High Level Strategic Dialogue with Dai Bingguo, State Councillor of the People's Republic of China. The on-going Strategic Dialogue serves to increase understanding between the two sides and allows for the strengthening of co-ordination on a wide range of issues including foreign and security policy. On the agenda of the dialogue are EU-China bilateral relations as well as regional and international issues. The dialogue will build on the EU-China summit of 14 February and use the positive momentum in EU-China relations to prepare the next summit, expected to take place in Brussels this autumn. The High Representative will also have a number of high-level meetings in Beijing, including with Premier Wen Jiabao and Defence Minister Liang Guanglie. In Hong Kong, Catherine Ashton will meet new Chief Executive Chun-ying Leung and discuss the EU's strong economic and political ties with Hong Kong.

In Cambodia the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) will bring together ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries with key partners: foreign ministers from a total of 27 countries will discuss key regional and also international issues. At the margins of ARF the High Representative will co-sign the EU-Philippines Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) as well as the EU's accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC). Together with ministers participating at ARF she will meet Prime Minister of Cambodia Samdech Hun Sen. In Siem Reap she will visit the EU-funded projects and later address the Lower Mekong Women's Policy Dialogue together with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Background

European External Action Service (EEAS)

EU relations with China: http://eeas.europa.eu/china/index_en.htm


EU relations with Asia: http://eeas.europa.eu/asia/index_en.htm

EU Trade with China: http://ec.europa.eu/trade/creating-opportunities/bilateral-relations/countries/china/index_en.htm

EU Trade with ASEAN: http://ec.europa.eu/trade/creating-opportunities/bilateral-relations/regions/asean/

Audio-visual

Audio-visual coverage of the trip will be available on Europe by Satellite http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/ebs/schedule.cfm

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