The EU accedes to Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia

Catherine Ashton, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, signed today in Phnom Penh the Instrument of Accession of the European Union to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC). Simultaneously the ten ASEAN Foreign Ministers signed the Instrument of Extension to agree to the EU’s accession from the ASEAN side.

"I am absolutely delighted to have signed the Instrument of accession of the European Union to the TAC today. This is an important step because it commits us to working together in tackling issues that we face in a peaceful way. It also confirms that we will work together to address some of the security and political concerns of the region," said Catherine Ashton upon the signature of the Accession Instrument.

The TAC is a non-aggression and cooperation pact between ASEAN members and their partners; it is also a precondition for membership of the East Asia Summit. The treaty was signed in February 1976 by the leaders of the then-members of ASEAN (Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Philippines). Today, the parties to the TAC are the 10 ASEAN member states, Papua New Guinea, China, India, Japan, Pakistan, South Korea, Russia, New Zealand, Mongolia, Australia, France, East Timor, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, North Korea, the United States, Turkey and Canada. Brazil and the UK are to become members soon.

The EU lodged an application to accede to the TAC on 7 December 2006. The process of accession took long because ASEAN had to amend - through a Third Protocol - the Treaty to enable "regional organizations" to accede. This Protocol has been signed in 2010, and entered into force on 12 June 2012.