Remarks of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton at the end of her visit to Asia

All Member States and all the institutions of the EU agree on the importance of our relationship with Asia. We have had many years of cooperation with the countries of ASEAN and the 10 countries of this region. And of course we have a strategic partnership with China and I have been holding discussions with China in the framework of the Strategic Dialogue that takes place every year. So this was a very significant visit for the European Union, a very important visit for our relationships with this region.

In China I met a number of senior people. The most important part of this leg was meeting with the State Councillor Dai Bingguo who is my interlocutor in the Strategic Dialogue. We spent 9 hours together and in those 9 hours we covered a range of different subjects. We have focused on human rights, we have focused on economic issues and on some of the areas of cooperation that we have, for example dealing with the issue of the Iranian nuclear programme. In that context I think we are also looking forward to the new leadership in China and looking at how we can broaden the work that we do.

One small example of possible cooperation - we have talked about urbanisation, an issue that affects the EU and China. So it was a good opportunity to set up serious work to see how we tackle the consequences of the fact that so many people are living in urban areas.

In April we had the EU-ASEAN Foreign Ministers meeting, that's 10 countries of ASEAN meeting with the EU member states. I co-chaired that meeting with Brunei. And at that meeting we set up an action plan looking in very practical ways at the work we can do together: on the environment, climate change, disaster management (something this region is very concerned about) and on some of the broader questions on security and economic well-being.
So coming to the post-ministerial conference in Phnom Penh was a chance to review progress. We have looked at what we have been doing; how we have managed to cooperate and how we continue to do so; and also to join in the ASEAN Regional Forum, which was a chance to discuss the broader security issues and the broader political issues of this region. And that includes looking at areas like South China Sea; thinking about how to try and move forward in support of Burma/Myanmar as it moves forward with its own reforms; and how to again build in strong collaboration between the different countries through our free trade agreements, our cooperation agreements.

And while I was here I was able to sign the Accession Instrument to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation which is of importance because it says that we will work together to try and tackle issues we face in a peaceful way and that we will work together to address some of the security and political concerns of the region.

On the margins I have met several colleagues bilaterally, including US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. We discussed how we want to collaborate in the Southeast Asia region and we have issued a joint statement to set out some ways that we would like to take this forward. This is a very important region for The United States of America, a very important region for us and there is much that we can do together: economic support, political support and so on.

We also touched upon the issues that we are most concerned about at this moment: what is happening in Syria and the work that has been going on since our meeting in Geneva and the Friends of Syria who met in Paris last week. And the Iranian nuclear programme - I gave her an update on how we are now moving forward towards the next meeting.