Statement by the spokesperson of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on recent trials under the Ethiopian Anti-Terrorism Proclamation

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

"High Representative Catherine Ashton has followed closely the case of 24 defendants charged under the Ethiopian Anti-Terrorism Proclamation, including journalist Eskinder Nega and opposition member Andualem Arage, through the EU Delegation in Addis Ababa which has observed all related trials so far.

While acknowledging the judicial process and recognising the sovereign right of every country to protect itself against terrorism, the High Representative is concerned that a lack of clarity with regard to what constitutes a terrorism offence in the ATP can affect the freedom of expression and the freedom of association, both enshrined in the Ethiopian Constitution. She is also seriously concerned at the severity of the sentences passed on 13 July 2012.

The High Representative has asked the EU Delegation in Addis Ababa to continue to monitor trials under the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation and to continue the dialogue with the Ethiopian Government on press freedom and human rights in the context of the regular political dialogue, as embedded in the Cotonou Agreement, which is the basis for the EU-Ethiopia partnership."