Remarks by High Representative Catherine Ashton with new EU Special Representative for Human Rights Stavros Lambrinidis

Brussels, 25 July 2012

It’s a great pleasure for me to introduce Stavros who is to be the first ever European Union Special Representative for Human Rights.

You know that Human Rights is a top priority for me. I have described it as a silver thread that runs through everything we do in EU Foreign Policy and that is why I decided earlier this year that it was the right time to appoint an EUSR for Human Rights.

His nomination follows the adoption in June of the Strategic Framework and the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy.

Stavros is a natural choice for the role because of his mix of high level political experience, commitment and expertise with human rights from a legal, diplomatic and political perspective. I am very well aware that Member States, the European Parliament, and civil society have been keen to see this post filled and I know that in Stavros we have someone who can meet everyone’s expectations.

We have deliberately given him a broad, flexible mandate to allow him to adapt to the circumstances wherever they may be in the world.
Stavros will work closely with me and with the European External Action Service which will provide him with full support.

As you all know, we face many human rights challenges in the world so this is not an easy role. But I am convinced that through his work, we will put the protection and promotion of human rights and democracy really at the heart of EU external action, and I am sure that he will also help enhance the coherence, the effectiveness and the visibility of our work in human rights.

Stavros doesn’t formally begin his post until September so I know that you will give him a little time to familiarise himself with the staff with the task before him before putting him too much on the spot.

Stavros, it is great to have you here.