Catherine Ashton travels to South Africa for the 11th EU-SA Ministerial political dialogue

The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the Commission, Catherine Ashton, is travelling to Pretoria to take part in the 11th Ministerial Political dialogue between the EU and South Africa, which she will co-chair with the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Nkoana-Mashabane on 24 August. As both sides prepare to hold their 5th Annual Summit on 18 September in Brussels, this visit underlines the EU’s commitment to strengthening its Strategic Partnership with a key partner in Africa and on the global stage.

Speaking ahead of her trip to South Africa, Catherine Ashton said: “I am deeply saddened by the loss of life at the Marikana mine in Rustenburg last week. Our thoughts are with the bereaved families at this difficult time. I understand the South African authorities are investigating in order to establish the circumstances that resulted in this tragic loss of life.”

"The European Union and South Africa are natural partners in many ways: they share common values based on their democratic experience and are determined advocates of peaceful resolution of conflicts. This first leg of my visit to Africa demonstrates the EU's commitment – and my personal commitment – to advancing our Strategic Partnership with South Africa. This will enable the EU and South Africa to discuss and provide leadership on current global and African issues, such as the future of Somalia and Sudan, the fight against piracy, and the situation in the Sahel. We will also address the need to curb the current spiral of violence in Syria, and to consolidate the international community's efforts to get Iran to respect its international obligations.”

Catherine Ashton will be continuing her visit to Africa with an official visit to Kenya.
Background

South Africa is one of the EU's key Strategic Partners in the world with a Partnership launched in 2007. This consolidated and built on the achievements of the Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement (TDCA) signed in 1999, which provided for the gradual liberalisation of more than 90% of two-way trade by 2012. The EU is South Africa's main trading partner (28% of total exports), the first foreign investor in the country (77.5% of Foreign Direct Investment) and its most important development partner (70% of all external assistance).

The EU-South Africa political dialogue has been gradually strengthened. It now covers a broad range of issues – peace and security, G20 issues, bilateral relations – and involves all levels of society from heads of states, ministers, members of parliaments and senior officials to experts, non-state actors and business communities.

Resources

Link to EEAS South Africa pages:

Link to EuropeAid South Africa pages:

Link to EU Delegation to South Africa:
http://www.eusa.org.za/

For audio video coverage please visit:
http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/ebs/schedule.cfm