Statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the commemoration of the 15th anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention

The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission issued the following statement today:

"I am pleased to mark the 15th anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), commemorated today with a special event at the seat of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague. The Convention is a cornerstone of the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation regime. It is unique, since it bans completely and without exception an entire category of weapons of mass destruction and requires the destruction of all chemical weapons under international verification.

The entry into force of the Convention set up the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) which continues to be a remarkable success and an inspiring example for effective multilateralism. This is a collective achievement for which I wish to congratulate the OPCW – both the Technical Secretariat and the States Parties – as well as other stakeholders.

The European Union has demonstrated its tangible support for the Organisation, inter alia, through its successive financial contributions in support of OPCW activities since 2005, which amount to a total of around €9.5 million. The latest such contribution, decided in March this year, is now in the phase of implementation. These contributions demonstrate how States Parties can work together as well as with the Technical Secretariat for the ultimate benefit of the Convention and its implementation.
The OPCW has come a long way in the last 15 years. Significant progress has been achieved in the destruction of declared stockpiles of chemical weapons and much work has been invested into the full and effective implementation of all the provisions of the CWC. Moreover, the number of States Parties has risen to 188. The Convention is thus approaching universality. Yet, as recent events have shown, the threat of chemical weapons is still very real. We call upon all States not Party to ratify or accede to the Convention without delay.

We will continue to work constructively with all stakeholders for the achievement of the object and purpose of the Convention in the coming years and in this respect look forward to the Third Review Conference in April 2013."