Algiers, 6 November 2012

Remarks by High Representative Catherine Ashton following her meeting with Algerian President Bouteflika, Algiers, 6th November 2012

"Mr President,

It's been a great honour to be here today on what has been a very short but very important visit. And I look forward to coming back here.

This visit has been an opportunity to congratulate Algeria on the reforms that have been carried out and to discuss with the Foreign Minister, the Prime Minister and with the President the economic challenges Algeria faces.

We have, for example, discussed the importance of support for small and medium-sized enterprises across the country. I always describe them as the backbone of the economy.

We talked about the strength of Algeria's economic relationship with the European Union and the opportunities of exploring ways of strengthening that relationship.

And we discussed the desire of Algeria to join the World Trade Organisation.

We've also talked about political issues. I was delighted to know that 17 of the 38 particular issues that were raised by Mr Salafranca - who led the EU’s election mission here - have already been implemented.

And we talked about the importance of Human Rights and developing further the political structures.
And especially with you, Mr President, I had the privilege of discussing the challenges that are happening in Mali and the Sahel. And I benefited greatly from your insights and knowledge.

We also talked about deepening and strengthening the relations in the Maghreb. This is something in Europe we are considering fully now and we wish to reinforce our partnership with the countries in the region.

So Mr President, thank you very much for this visit. I look forward very much to coming back.

Thank you."