Statement by the spokesperson of High Representative Catherine Ashton on the publication of tenders to expand Israeli settlements

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:

“The High Representative deeply regrets this week’s publication of tenders to expand the settlements of Ramot and Pisgat Ze’ev by over 1200 housing units.

The EU has consistently maintained that negotiations remain the best way forward to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and that these negotiations should lead to an agreement on the borders of the two states, based on the June 4 1967 lines, unless otherwise agreed between the parties. Unilateral action by either party cannot prejudge the outcome of negotiations and will not be recognized by the European Union.

Continuous expansion of settlements, wherever this takes place, further complicates ongoing diplomatic efforts to avoid a deterioration in the prospects for a return to negotiations at this critical time.

Settlements are illegal under international law and threaten to make a two-state solution impossible. The EU has repeatedly urged the Government of Israel to immediately end all settlement activities in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, in line with its obligations under the Roadmap.”