First meeting of EU-Egypt Task Force to support the on-going reforms in Egypt

The first meeting of the EU-Egypt Task Force, announced by Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi during his visit to Brussels in September, will take place in Cairo, Egypt on 14 November. The Task Force is the concrete manifestation of the reinforced cooperation between the new Egypt and the EU, which is committed to provide support that is a tailor-made to the needs of the country. It will be co-chaired by Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, and Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohamed Amr. Among those also participating are Commission Vice-President Antonio Tajani, Commissioner Štefan Füle, Bernardino León, the EU Special Representative for the Southern Mediterranean Region, Stavros Lambrinidis, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, Ministers of the Egyptian Government, European Foreign Ministers, Members of the European Parliament, business leaders, senior officials from European and International Financial institutions, as well as representatives from civil society.

Catherine Ashton said: "Egypt has come a long way in the 20 months since the people gathered on Tahrir Square to demand political and socio-economic rights. The holding of democratic presidential elections was an historic landmark for this country. The people and the government of Egypt are dealing with huge challenges, drafting a new constitution, holding parliamentary elections and working to deepen the democratic transition. It is vital that this transition continues to ensure the full respect of human rights for all, not least women, who played such a key role in the events of spring 2011. In this work, the EU stands by Egypt's side. Now is also the time to get the economy back on track by reviving tourism, creating new jobs and encouraging investment. As Egypt's main trading partner and the biggest source of aid and investment, the EU has a key role to play. The Task Force is a unique way of sustaining the achievements made so far and addressing Egypt's political and economic needs. We look forward to welcoming well over than 100 European companies at the business event being held as part of the Task Force."
The events of spring 2011 brought momentous change to Egypt and the neighbourhood. Recent democratic developments have allowed a fresh start in EU-Egypt relations and the forging of a closer partnership based on the common objective of promoting of peace, stability and prosperity, and the crucial core values of human rights, the rule of law, and good governance. The Task Force will ensure effective coordination of the support from the EU and its Member States, as well as other European and international bodies.

The EU-Egypt Task Force is the third task force in the Southern Mediterranean, with the first held in Tunis in September 2011 and the second held in Jordan in February 2012. It was set up to help address the challenges Egypt is facing in its political and economic reform process.

The Task Force will be an opportunity to listen to the protagonists of Egypt's democratic transition and reform efforts. It will look at ways to support Egypt and the EU's priorities in both the economic and political spheres: inclusive sustainable economic growth and social development, through job creation, investment promotion, trade and technology transfer, and democratic rights and social justice for the Egyptian people.

The Task Force meeting on 14 November will open with introductory remarks by the two co-chairs, and Prime Minister Hesham Mohamed Kandeel will give an address followed by a morning debate focused on political reforms and enhanced governance and an afternoon debate that will look at economic reforms, development and employment issues and asset recovery. Egyptian government officials and EU senior officials as well as representatives of Member States, business leaders and representatives of international financial institutions will join the debate. The Task Force is expected to announce an unprecedented package of financial support from the EU institutions and banks.

The Task Force meeting will be preceded on 13 November by special sessions with civil society and business representatives from both Egypt and the EU. There will also be meetings between Members of the European Parliament and representatives of the Shoura Council and members of the Constituent Assembly. The Task Force will be debriefed on their findings.

On 13th November, the High Representative together with the Egyptian Minister of Tourism will unveil the authorised facsimile (exact replica) of the burial chamber and sarcophagus of Tutankhamun at the inaugural event of the EU-Egypt Task Force. The facsimile is a gift to the people of Egypt from the Factum Foundation (Madrid) and the Society of the Friends of the Royal Tombs of Egypt (Zurich) to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the discovery of the tomb. The combined efforts of the EU and the Egyptian government have made it possible to bring it to Egypt.