Statement by the Spokesperson of EU High Representative, Catherine Ashton, on the killing of the women's rights activist Nadia Seddiqi in Afghanistan on 10 December 2012

“The High Representative strongly condemns the killing on 10 December of the women's rights activist Nadia Seddiqi, who was head of the women's affairs department in Laghman province, Afghanistan. Mrs Seddiqi was assassinated just months after her predecessor was killed by a bomb. The High Representative expresses her deepest condolences to Mrs Seddiqi’s family and to her friends and co-workers.

The High Representative is profoundly concerned at the frequent acts of aggression against human rights defenders in Afghanistan. In particular, women human rights defenders who have worked fearlessly for gender equality and the empowerment of women often find themselves the targets of brutal attacks, while serious violations of women's rights remain widespread.

The High Representative recalls that the Government of Afghanistan and the international community have made it clear that progress in Afghanistan must be based on renunciation of violence and respect for the Afghan constitution, including its human rights provisions and, notably, the rights of women. The courage of Nadia Seddiqi reminds us that profound change in the way women are regarded will be needed if Afghanistan is to develop, as we would all wish, into a state based on respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law, which enjoys the full support of the international community.”