Remarks by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton
following the EU-CELAC Foreign Affairs Ministers meeting

I’d like to begin, first of all, by thanking you, Minister Moreno and your team, for your wonderful hospitality here in Santiago. I spent yesterday evening at the Paranal Observatory, which is just one wonderful example of the on-going collaboration between the European Union and this region.

More than anything I want to underline – as you have said, Minister – the relationships that exist already between the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and the European Union. We have history, we have the present and most importantly of all we have a future in which we will have an increasingly important relationship between us. The strong links that we've already got will be put to good use as we seek to strengthen and deepen the relationship in a number of different ways.

Minister, you have heads of state and governments coming to visit and I know that this is a very important summit, particularly because there are big issues around sustainable development and economic growth that these heads of state and governments will wish to discuss.

In the meeting Minister Moreno and I have just co-chaired, we had the opportunity to look at these challenges – with 60 ministers and their representatives around the table – and to consider how we can further the ties between us.

As you've said Minister, we have strong investment ties, and with more than € 385 billion invested in the region, the European Union's companies, European businesses have huge interest in the region and will I hope contribute to the success of this region and vice-versa.

In our discussions we have underlined our belief that there is much more that we can do in order to strengthen this investment and to contribute to economic growth, which is really important both to the European Union and to the countries of this region. Together, I believe that we can do more.
One of the features of my discussions here has been how to support small and medium-sized businesses, with greater opportunities in their bi-regional relationships. I know that the various EU representatives here for this occasion – including Trade Commissioner Karl de Gucht and European Commission Vice-President Tajani – are especially pleased that opportunities have been provided alongside the summit for them to engage with their counterparts and to have businesses talking with each other, strengthening bi-regional business ties. I pay tribute to the organisers for providing for so many such events and opportunities as part of the summit.

We also highlighted the importance today of linking this economic growth to stability, along with the importance for all of us to ensure that we put our values into action in our support for deep democracies, not only in our own regions but also in what we can offer throughout the rest of the world. We collaborate on these values in our human rights discussions, in our pursuit of equality and in our capacity to work together. All of that adds up to a relationship that has deep roots and will be of ever increasing importance in the future.

Thank you.