Joint Statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton and Commissioner Karel De Gucht following factory fires in Bangladesh

Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Karel De Gucht, Commissioner for Trade made today the following statement:

“We are deeply saddened to learn of the deaths of young workers from a fire this weekend in a garment factory in Dhaka, Bangladesh. This tragedy is all the more shocking as it follows only two months after another textile factory fire in Bangladesh killed more than a hundred people. The EU is Bangladesh’s largest trade partner and Bangladesh benefits from preferential access to the EU market. The European Union is deeply concerned about the labour conditions, including health and safety provisions, established for workers in factories across the country.

In the light of both these tragedies, the European Union calls upon the Bangladeshi authorities to act immediately to ensure that factories comply with international labour standards including International Labour Organisation conventions.

The EU is willing and ready to assist the Bangladeshi authorities in any way it can to meet international standards. At the same time, European and international companies need to do more to promote better health and safety standards in garment factories in Bangladesh, in line with internationally recognised guidelines on Corporate Social Responsibility.”