Remarks by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton following her meeting with German Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Guido Westerwelle

Thank you very much Guido. I think the last time I was in Berlin it was your Geburtstag and I was here for that so it's a great delight to be back again and to have the chance to meet with you, with the Defence Minister and of course to have the honour of meeting with the Chancellor. As you've said this is about a real opportunity for the European Union to go forward in developing what I've described as the Comprehensive Approach. For the European Union to operate in the world, we have the real advantage of bringing together the Member States, the institutions, the instruments that we have to be able to promote the values we hold and to be engaged in the process of peace and security across the world.

It's very obvious when as yesterday we met the President of Somalia, he made his first trip to Europe and came to Brussels, to thank the European Union for the twenty years we have stood by the people of Somalia, but also knowing that for the next years we will stand with him as he builds the institutions and brings what he hopes will be lasting peace and security to his country. It's also of course so relevant in the neighbourhood in which we live. I said when I took on this role that in a way Europe should be judged by its ability to operate in its neighbourhood and to bring greater peace and security to that neighbourhood. We see that in the role that we play in our Southern Neighbourhood, our support for countries in transition both politically and economically, again bringing what we have in the European Union to bear on the problems that they face, the challenges they clearly have at the present time, but also in our role in the Western Balkans, and trying to develop ways in which normalization of relations can take place between Serbia and Kosovo. And as I lead the discussions between both Prime Ministers may I commend them for the efforts that they are making in trying to find a way through this, and as you know further talks will continue shortly.
But I also believe in the role that the European Union can play across the world. Our strong partnership with the United States of America is never to be underestimated. Our strategic partners across the world, Russia, China, Brazil, Mexico, countries where we've developed not only a bilateral relationship based on strong economic links but a political relationship based on challenges that we face together and opportunities that we should take to support development, to support security across the world.

And as you mentioned, Guido, no way do I feel that more than in the discussions with Iran, where we lead negotiations on behalf of the Security Council in the E3+3, where powers come together to try and find a way through to ensure our confidence in the truly peaceful nature of the Iran's nuclear programme. And as we look forward to what I hope will be the decision to come to talks very shortly, I hope that we'll be able to make progress and as you have said to link that to the offers that have been made by the Vice President and to the knowledge that there is a way through this if we have the determination to do so.

Thank you for receiving me here, it's always a delight to be in Berlin, never too long a visit unfortunately but thank you Guido, and thank you for the work that you do personally to support this European direction and to bring your wisdom and knowledge to bear on so much of the work that we do.