Washington DC, 14 February 2013

Remarks by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton at the start of her meeting with US Secretary of State John Kerry

Well, thank you. There’s nowhere better to be on Valentine’s Day than in Washington, D.C. to celebrate this great partnership. And as I’ve said to you before, we want to be your most reliable partner.

Europe and the United States share many things. We share the same values; we share the same aspirations for our people, economic and political. And the opportunity of being able to deepen those economic ties is very exciting. It’s very exciting across the 27 countries of the European Union. I think it’s very exciting here, too.

I was the trade commissioner. I joke that I did beef economics with my dear friend Ron Kirk. It was tough, but with political will and the good support of industry, we can achieve an enormous amount. And I think we can do this and do it in good time. And you and I will have a role to play in that, in terms of the political strengths we can bring to it. But I do think this is something that will add great value to our relationship, and as importantly will support our economies and support our people with jobs.

And on the political front, it’s not a surprise that I wanted to come here to talk to you, because next week I host the most important part of the Serbia-Kosovo dialogue, where the Prime Ministers will come to Brussels for two days. The United States is an incredibly valuable partner in that effort.

And then from there, I will go to Almaty to lead the discussions with Iran. I always look for success in those and I will do my best on behalf of the P5+1 - or E3+3 as we call it. But it’s important that we continue to try and make our efforts successful in that regard.
And then so much else in our neighbourhood, particularly where we need to continue to support the people of Syria and the countries around it, who are now dealing with refugees coming across the border and worry about the future. I’m thinking too that when this violence ends, we will need to help rebuild Syria.

And of course, when we think about the Middle East peace process, undoubtedly you and I will be in regular discussion.

But most importantly, I want to say congratulations to you, Secretary Kerry. It’s great to see you here, and I’m so looking forward to working with you.