Statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton following the EU-Russian Federation political dialogue meeting with Foreign Minister Lavrov

The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the Commission issued the following statement today:

"I had an open and constructive exchange of views with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in the framework of our regular European Union-Russian Federation Political Dialogue in Brussels today. We discussed a number of international issues, in particular the situation in Syria and the upcoming E3+3 negotiations with Iran, as well as regional issues.

Regarding Syria, we gave our full support to the efforts of the Joint Special Representative Brahimi. The EU is encouraged by the recent initiative by the coalition leader Sheik Moaz Al Khatib for a political dialogue and hopes that representatives of Syrian regime do not miss this opportunity to help end the violence.

Ahead of the next round of the E3+3 negotiations with Iran on 26 February in Kazakhstan, we expressed hope that Iran will come to these negotiations with flexibility and that we can make substantial progress. We remain determined to work towards a solution of the Iranian nuclear issue and the key is for Iran to comply fully with its international obligations.

We also discussed the Middle East Peace Process, where I stressed the urgent need for renewed, structured and substantial peace efforts in 2013 which will require work with all international partners, including through the Quartet.
Furthermore, we also talked about the regional issues, including Georgia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Transnistria.

We also touched upon the bilateral relations between the EU and Russia. Russia is a key strategic partner for the EU and the New Agreement would bring a fresh momentum in the relationship."