Statement by the spokesperson of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on recent developments in East Jerusalem and the West Bank

The spokesperson of Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and security Policy and Vice President of the Commission, issued the following statement today:

“The High Representative is concerned by developments over the past week in East Jerusalem and the West Bank which have increased tensions on the ground and risk undermining current efforts to re-launch peace talks. It is important that those concerned exercise maximum restraint and refrain from any actions which could drive the sides to the conflict further apart.

The High Representative is disturbed by recent events in East Jerusalem such as those that took place at Orthodox Easter, the unrest in the area of the Haram al Sharif/Temple Mount and the temporary detention of the Mufti of Jerusalem and Palestine on Wednesday. It is essential that access to the holy sites in Jerusalem for peaceful worship for all denominations is fully respected.

She is also very concerned by reports of the approval of settlement plans for 300 houses at Beit EL near Ramallah in the West Bank. The EU has repeatedly declared settlements to be illegal under international law and to constitute an obstacle to peace.”