Remarks by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton

at the end of her visit to Egypt

Today I've spent all day in meetings with the acting President, vice-President, Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, the Minister of Defence; I've met with young people from Tamarod and I have just met the representatives of the Freedom and Justice Party and the former Prime Minister. My messages have been very consistent: we have been strongly supportive of the people of this great country, we want to see Egypt move forward in its democratic future and we want to see that happen swiftly. We've talked with a lot of people about the prospect of elections taking place in the next few months, and the role the European Union can play in helping to monitor and observe these elections.

We have talked about – building on the statements I have made and also many phone conversations I had with people here – the importance of a very inclusive process, to ensure that this country really belongs to everyone here, that people can feel that they are participating in that. Not surprisingly, I have heard different views, but the main message I wanted to give was that on the need for those principles and values to govern the future of this country, to support that political process and support the economy of Egypt as well.

In all of my visits to Egypt we have been very clear with everyone about the importance of an inclusive process and a political plan, so that the country can move forward. With everyone where I have said the word inclusive, most people actually said it before I did. Inclusivity means that you have to move forward and you have to find a way that those who wish to participate in the future can do so.

I have made it clear in my statements and all the meetings I had that I believe Mr. Morsi should be released, and that I believe that political prisoners should be released. I make the distinction between people who may be charged for other things, and those being held. I was assured he is well. I would have liked to have seen him. I was assured that he is well-cared for.
It's important – not only for the Freedom and Justice Party, but for all those involved in the future of the country - to know that the future really is about ensuring that everybody can be engaged. If we can be useful and helpful, and I said this to everyone, we would like to be that, but this is your country and you must take it forward. What we want to do is to support the people of Egypt – economically, in terms of their rights and so on. We are a long-term partner and friend.

I have not heard anything that would suggest today that Egypt is going in any direction other than its own direction. Egypt is a very strong and very important country, not only in the region, but in the world. It has an incredible history and amazing future. The question now is how we – those of us who have visited this country many times and my team based here - can help and support that future.

This country is unique and its future and its direction will be determined by the people. We wish it enormous success.

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