Remarks by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton

following the extraordinary meeting of

Foreign Affairs Council on Egypt

We just had a long and in-depth discussion with Foreign Ministers on the very worrying developments in Egypt and we have adopted conclusions which will be available to you shortly. In those conclusions we first of all stressed our support for the people of Egypt. The European Union has been and is supporting them in their quest for democracy, respect for human rights, social justice and of course economic prosperity. Egypt is a crucial partner country and our relationships with the people of Egypt matter enormously to us.

It is because of that that we follow the developments with great concern. We strongly condemn all acts of violence and we do believe that the recent operations of the security forces have been disproportionate and we are worried about the resulting alarming number of people who have been killed.

We also condemn acts of terrorism such as the murder of policeman in Sinai, we have seen attacks on government installations, destruction of churches (we are very worried about the Coptic churches) and mosques. We call on all sides to stop the cycle of violence, the provocations and the hate speech.

We want and urge all political parties to engage in a real and inclusive dialogue, to restore the democratic process, a national dialogue that can be open to all. Political groups should not be excluded as long as they renounce violence and respect democratic principles. Political reconciliation and working together is surely the right solution.

The European Union and me personally, we stand ready to support Egypt in this process.
We have agreed as well to review the issue of our assistance to Egypt with an understanding that assistance to the most vulnerable groups and to civil society must continue.

Member States have agreed to suspend export licences to Egypt of any equipment used for internal repression and to reassess their export licences covered by the EU common position. This of course is Member State competence.

I conclude by saying this: Egypt is a key partner of the European Union, we are ready to assist the people of Egypt as they go forward, I hope, in stability, inclusivity, democracy and prosperity. And we are ready to support a revived political dialogue which must of course be fully inclusive. And we will continue to follow the situation closely and stay in touch with the Member States of the European Union and the institutions as we work and move forward.