"On my first day in office, I would like to recognise and pay tribute to the work of Javier Solana and Benita Ferrero-Waldner. Both have tirelessly advanced the common European project and have given so much of their time and effort to giving the European Union a stronger voice in foreign and security policy.

I believe there has been important progress in this field over the past years, and this is in great part due to these two people, who I see as colleagues and friends. Javier and Benita have elevated the reputation of the European Union and ensured that we speak with conviction and clarity on the major issues that face us on the world stage.

I would also like to thank them for the support they have offered me in my new role. I intend to build on their great work and achievements.

I am looking forward to working closely with colleagues in the Council, the Commission and the Member States to strengthen Europe’s foreign policy. We will do this with determination and with full respect for the values that the European Union stands for, above all peace and prosperity, freedom and democracy, the rule of law and the universality and indivisibility of human rights."