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Remarks by High Representative Catherine Ashton at the end of her visit to India, 17 January 2012, New Delhi

I came to India to further the relationship between the European Union and India. And to do that I've been meeting with a number of different ministers. I met with Foreign Minister Krishna and we had a wide-ranging discussion about preparations for the summit coming up in a few weeks and about some of the foreign policy issues in which we are engaged. Obviously for India there are big regional questions; so we focused on Afghanistan and Pakistan, they are of enormous importance. We wanted to talk about some of the ways we can collaborate, for example in the fight against piracy off the coast of Somalia. We looked at how we can better tackle the problem that is becoming a greater problem for India, as the pirates move closer to the coast of India. And how we develop regional solutions, working together as collaboratively as we can. So too on cyber security and counter terrorism; areas where the EU is increasingly engaged with India. So a broad discussion which took in those regional questions and broader security issues.

And today I met with the Minister of Defence Antony, where we elaborated more on the issues of defence and security. We've had some successful meetings here just before the holidays, where our experts have had the chance to put together a roadmap of how we'll take forward our collaboration into the future. And I'll be carrying on my discussion with the National Security Advisor and I also met the Trade Minister Sharma to discuss moving on the Free Trade Agreement.

The relationship between the European Union and India is in a good place, but there's more that we can do. I think as we've brought the post-Lisbon European Union to the attention of India, we have been able to raise some of the broader questions. I was saying to the defence minister that I chair the meetings of the 27, soon to be 28, defence ministers, and that's a real opportunity as we think about issues like pooling and sharing, bringing together our knowledge and our assets and our ability to operate so that we have more to offer India. And India, in its strategic role with countries - particularly perhaps with Brazil and South Africa, its role in the United Nations - has much to offer us too. So for me, there is good progress, but there is much more that we can do.

P R E S S

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Further progress can be achieved already in the coming weeks, on the occasion of the next EU-India summit. A number of things are on the agenda. The summit will look at progress in the Free Trade Agreement negotiations. It's an opportunity for 1.7 billion people in total to get the benefit; it can ensure important growth for India and the European Union. India projects 7.5% growth for the next year, that's high in our terms in the European Union, but India would like to see more. And for us, growth strategies are going to be everything this year as we move away from economic turbulence and into economic growth. So too in energy; the ability to work together on energy issues is going to be of enormous importance. There'll be an energy statement that will come out of the summit, and again this is a key area for both of us to develop. And some of the broader questions that I've mentioned - like regional cooperation - will be discussed.

If we look at Pakistan; we've just done a 5-year plan for our engagement with Pakistan. We recognise that Pakistan has had enormous challenges in recent times; from the floods we've seen in the last 2 years, to the issues that particularly India focuses upon and relate to the borders of Pakistan and India; the issues of terrorism and counter-terrorism. This is why we've been working closely with Pakistan to try and develop their capacity to provide security for their own people and indeed security for their neighbours as well.

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