

## **Joint EU – US statement on the Asia-Pacific region**

European Union (EU) High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton met in Phnom Penh on July 12, 2012 to exchange views on developments in the Asia-Pacific, demonstrating the importance the European Union and the United States attach to this thriving region and its peaceful and dynamic development.

### **Common objectives**

High Representative Ashton and Secretary Clinton noted that interdependence between Asia, the European Union and the United States has reached unprecedented levels. Closer consultation between the European Union and the United States on Asia-Pacific issues bilaterally, and with partners across the region, will be aimed at advancing regional security, development, well-being, and prosperity.

High Representative Ashton and Secretary Clinton welcomed the progress being made in regional cooperation and integration in the Asia-Pacific. This enhances the capacity of the region to address complex trans-national issues, while contributing to strengthened governance. The European Union and the United States particularly welcome the central role played by ASEAN and its promotion of wider regional fora, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum and the East Asia Summit. Both welcome an active and constructive role for China in the Asia-Pacific Region.

### **Peace and security**

Both sides intend to seek closer cooperation with Asian partners in fighting transnational crime, terrorism and addressing cyber-security issues, while ensuring freedom of expression and the free flow of information in accordance with international law. They are cooperating with partners to build regional disaster preparedness and crisis response capacity.

The European Union and the United States commit to strengthening cooperation in counter-piracy based on international law including dealing with its root causes. Both sides plan to work with Asian partners on increasing maritime security based on international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and lend assistance to the development of confidence building measures to reduce the risk of crises and conflict. On the South China Sea, both sides continue to encourage ASEAN and China to advance a Code of Conduct and to resolve territorial and maritime disputes through peaceful, diplomatic and cooperative solutions.

The European Union and the United States are continuing to work to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and urge North Korea to live up to its international obligations and commitments.

Both sides also exchanged views on the recent historic transformations taking place in Burma/Myanmar and noted the importance of increased coordination on development assistance and responsible and transparent private sector investments.

High Representative Ashton and Secretary Clinton decided to further cooperate with Asia-Pacific partners in promoting democracy and human rights, in particular those of vulnerable groups such as women and children as well as ethnic and religious minorities. They recognized the importance of civil society and decided to further promote people-to-people exchanges with Asia-Pacific countries.

### **Sustainable development**

High Representative Ashton and Secretary Clinton reaffirmed that ensuring sustainable development will remain a key priority in relations with regional partners. While much will be achieved through economic growth and intra-regional cooperation, strong donor commitment is still necessary. Thus, eradication of poverty will remain high on the agenda with Asia-Pacific countries. The European Union and the United States intend to continue engaging on key governance and development challenges with the Lower Mekong and Pacific Islands sub-regions, both bilaterally and through the Friends of the Lower Mekong Initiative and the Pacific Islands Forum.

High Representative Ashton and Secretary Clinton discussed the consequences of climate change in the Asia-Pacific and stressed the need for collective action on the global and regional level. The European Union and the United States intend to closely coordinate efforts to address climate change in the region, not least in the Pacific Islands. In this context, they reiterated the importance of ensuring access to energy as a key growth driver, while enhancing efforts at all levels to lower emissions. Both sides recognise the wealth of biodiversity and natural resources of the Asia-Pacific region and recommit to efforts in international fora and through bilateral cooperation to promote their preservation.

### **Trade and economics**

High Representative Ashton and Secretary Clinton underscored the importance of open markets in enhancing growth and development in the Asia-Pacific region, which also has a direct and positive impact on the economies of the European Union and the United States. They decided to continue working together and with partners to improve reciprocal market access for goods and services including government procurement, to reduce non-tariff-barriers, to provide legal security for investment, and to protect intellectual property rights.

### **Nest Steps**

The European Union and the United States appreciate the opportunity for dialogue offered by the ASEAN Regional Forum. In line with the 2011 EU-US Summit commitment to increase "cooperation on political, economic, security, and human rights issues in the Asia-Pacific region to advance peace, stability and prosperity," they plan to intensify cooperation with Asia-Pacific partners to address regional and global challenges. To this end, both sides decided to continue the regular high level EU-US dialogue on the region at the political and senior officials' level.