



EUROPEAN UNION

Brussels, 20 June 2010  
A 107/10

## **Statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton on Israeli Gaza decision**

Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission said: *"I am very encouraged by the announcement of the Government of Israel. It represents a significant improvement and a positive step forward. Once implemented, Israel's new policy should improve the lives of the ordinary people of Gaza while addressing the legitimate security concerns of Israel."*

The High Representative Catherine Ashton reiterated the EU belief that the situation in Gaza remains unsustainable and the blockade is counterproductive, hurts ordinary people, prevents reconstruction and fuels radicalism.

*"We need to enable people to reconstruct their homes, to build schools, to improve infrastructure, allowing business to revive so that people in Gaza can get on with their ordinary lives,"* High Representative Catherine Ashton added.

As stated by EU foreign ministers last week, the EU is ready to support Israel and the Palestinian Authority in the opening of land crossings. The 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access and UNSC resolution 1860 should remain the key framework.

*"I would also like to reiterate that Gilad Shalit must be released immediately,"* Catherine Ashton said. *"More work remains to be done. Implementation is key. We want to work in partnership with Israel and the Palestinian Authority to find a satisfactory solution – I am in contact with the Government of Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the Quartet partners. We will continue discussions and examine the details of the proposed changes and their implementation. I hope that current efforts will not be undermined. To make progress, an atmosphere of calm, restraint and responsibility is of paramount importance,"* Catherine Ashton concluded.

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## **P R E S S**

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