

**Statement by Catherine Ashton,
High Representative and Vice-President of the EC,
at the occasion of Europe Day 2010 on 9th May**

Exactly 60 years ago on 9 May 1950 the declaration of the great European Robert Schuman laid the ground for a united, stable and peaceful Europe, that would emerge from the ashes of two devastating world wars.

This historical declaration and its great significance continue to lead the integration project on the European continent and inspire partnerships we forge beyond the borders of Europe.

Europe Day has become the symbol of a new beginning, of a free and successful way of peaceful cooperation between sovereign nations, based on shared values and common interests such as peace, solidarity, democracy, welfare of people and the rule of law.

On the occasion of Europe Day 2010 I would like to emphasize the high importance that Europe is giving to its partners around the world. Only together will we be able to create policies and initiatives to tackle the challenges the world is facing in the 21st century.

We have to find effective answers on a wide range of risks and threats: the fragility of states, terrorism, organised crime as well as the wider issues that affect our citizens: energy, climate change and the competition for natural resources, pandemics, illegal migration and human trafficking, financial and economic issues, trade, health and demography.

Europeans are united in the way they perceive foreign policy and the external action. There is consensus for more cooperation, coherence, visibility and joint action. The European Union is reshaping its institutional capabilities to respond adequately to the new challenges.

At the heart of these institutional changes is the European External Action Service (EEAS), one of the central innovations of the Lisbon Treaty that came into force on 1st December 2009. After I presented the proposal for the setting up of the service at the end of March 2010, I would like to see it up and running by the end of this year.

The EEAS will strengthen the impact of EU values and interests around the globe. It will enable the EU to have a more ambitious, effective, coherent and visible foreign policy.

The EEAS will be our principal interface with international partners; i.e. Europe's "eyes, ears and face" in our day-to-day dealings abroad. It will promote comprehensive policies in a strategic manner.

I am aware that current institutional developments are watched closely by our partners around the world. I am convinced that the EEAS will bring new level of comprehension and cooperation in our partnerships, to the benefit of all of us.

The EEAS will be set up 60 years after the adoption of the Schuman declaration, but very much in its spirit.

Happy Europe Day!