



Press Release

Catherine Ashton travels to Central Asia

Brussels, 26 November 2012 – Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission, travels to Central Asia this week. She will start the visit in Kyrgyzstan, where she will chair the EU-Central Asia Ministerial meeting in Bishkek on Tuesday, 27 November, before continuing to Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan over the following three days.

Speaking ahead of her trip, Catherine Ashton said: *"The EU is playing an increasingly important role in Central Asia, through its presence on the ground and through engagement with its partners in the region. The EU-Central Asia Ministerial meeting will allow us to discuss key issues of mutual interest including security and regional cooperation, energy, environment and water as well as other priority areas of the EU-Central Asia Strategy such as education, rule of law, human rights and initiatives on civil society. By supporting reform and transformation we hope to encourage trade and investment. Five years after the adoption of the EU's Central Asia Strategy, the meeting should also allow us to assess and to deepen our cooperation."*

The EU-Central Asia Ministerial meeting on 27 November is the first to be held in the Kyrgyz Republic. It will be attended by the Foreign Ministers or Deputy Foreign Ministers of all five countries of the region (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). It is the ninth Ministerial since the Central Asia Strategy was adopted by the European Council in 2007, and follows the June 2012 Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions on Central Asia and the Progress Report on implementation of the Strategy.

In Bishkek on Tuesday the High Representative will also meet bilaterally with President Almazbek Atambaev and Foreign Minister Erlan Abdyldaev.

In Tashkent on Wednesday, 28 November, the High Representative will meet with President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov and Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov.

In Dushanbe on Thursday, 29 November, the High Representative will meet President of Tajikistan Emomalii Rahmon and Foreign Minister Hamrokhon Zarifi.

She will conclude the visit in Astana where she will meet Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbaev and Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov. In Astana she will also deliver a speech on relations between the EU and Central Asia.

Throughout the trip HRVP Ashton will also meet representatives of civil society.

Background info

The EU and Central Asia: http://eeas.europa.eu/central_asia/index_en.htm

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