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## R E M A R K S

### **by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton at the end of her visit to Cairo, Egypt**

"Hello everyone. It's very nice to see some faces I recognize here and to have the opportunity to spend a little bit of time with you on my trip to Cairo.

I've had a number of important meetings with the President, with the Deputy Prime Minister, with the Minister of Defence, the Foreign Minister, I've met with the Grand Imam, with the Coptic Pope, with civil society, with the Freedom and Justice Party and with the El Nour party. So I've held a broad range of discussions. I want to say at the beginning that it's very important for everyone to understand that I don't come here to interfere or to mediate. We are important partners together, the European Union and Egypt. We do a lot together.

I met yesterday morning with the Foreign Minister and our discussions focused on the work that we're doing together in trying to support the removal of chemical weapons in Syria for example, or the work that we've been doing together at the United Nations last week. So this is an important relationship that we want to build upon. Of course, I was extremely interested in talking about the economic and political situation here in Egypt. For the economy, the European Union is a strong partner and is working with the government, and with civil society, with others to see how we can best help and support especially the most vulnerable in society. We do that everywhere we possibly can and it's very important that we recognize the needs of those who are the most vulnerable.

In addition, of course, we focused too on the political situation here and the importance of Egypt moving forward. I remember well the events of January 2011, my meetings with so many people who told me their aspirations for a democratic Egypt. And I believe those

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aspirations remain the same. So it is extremely important to find a way to continue on that journey. I met with Amre Moussa, who I've known for a long time, to talk about the constitution, the work that is going on to engage people in the forming of the constitution. And in all our deliberations, we stress the importance of inclusiveness to ensure that the political future of Egypt belongs to the Egyptian people, that they are the decision makers, and that they have the opportunity with the elections, in the near future, to make their voices heard.

Inclusiveness means trying to involve everybody and that also means reaching out to each other. Because it is important to find ways to have the right kind of dialogue and that's what we've been urging everyone, not because we are interfering but because we know from our own experience in Europe how important it is to try to have the correct involvement and engagement. It's something that needs to be a process that continues. We don't insist on anything. It's your country. We are just, as I say, glad to be partners and glad to be supporters of Egypt finding its way to democracy in an inclusive way.

I think there has been quite a lot of outreach. What I mean by outreach is that I hear people saying we understand the importance of inclusivity. For example on the constitution, I think there have been ways in which people have tried to engage others. And that's really important in trying to find a way forward that's going to enable people to participate fully in political life. And my guess is that's a process that will take a little time. But it's important for everyone to feel that they're able to participate in a process as well as ultimately in political life in the future.

With General El Sisi, we discussed a whole range of issues. We discussed the situation in Sinai, which we are concerned about, and I expressed my condolences for the soldiers and police officers who have been killed there. We talked about the way in which the government is moving forward. We talked about the importance of this inclusive process. And we talked about the possibilities for helping the economy. So it was a very wide-ranging and I think a very important conversation in which we covered a variety of different issues. I can say that I got a real sense of everyone really trying to go forward in the right way.

It's been, as always, a great privilege to be in this country. I think it's my fourteenth visit and I look forward to my fifteenth visit. I wish everyone well. And I give through all of you my very best wishes to the people of Egypt.

Thank you."

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