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S T A T E M E N T

**by the Spokesperson of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the
second anniversary of the publication of the Report of the Bahrain
Independent Commission of Inquiry**

The spokesperson of Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the Commission, issued the following statement today:

"Following the events of February-March 2011, the Bahraini authorities took the commendable initiative to establish the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) which formulated recommendations in its final report exactly two years ago.

On this occasion, High Representative Catherine Ashton welcomes the steps already taken by the Government of Bahrain to implement some of these recommendations. She welcomes in particular the operational launch of the office of the Ministry of Interior's Ombudsman and encourages it to act independently and effectively. The creation of the 'Prisoners and Detainees' Commission", which will monitor places of detention in order to prevent torture and ill-treatment, bringing Bahrain closer to ratifying OPCAT, is also an important initiative. The High Representative also notices the increasingly active role assumed by the National Institution for Human Rights since it has been reformed.

However, much remains to be done and the High Representative encourages the Bahraini authorities to implement all BICI recommendations in a timely and complete fashion. Establishing new institutions is important but they must now produce concrete results in order to win the confidence of the public. In particular, more needs to be done on accountability and the fight against impunity regarding deaths and allegations of torture during the 2011 unrest and in response to ongoing allegations of abuses.

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The High Representative invites the Government of Bahrain to go even beyond the recommendations of the BICI report and to also address those made under the UN Universal Periodic Review which it accepted in full or in part.

The success of this process very much depends on the constructive cooperation between the government, the opposition and all Bahraini citizens. The High Representative urges again all sides to seize peaceful dialogue channels without preconditions, rejecting violence in all its forms, in order to achieve lasting reconciliation.

The EU looks forward to the publication on 1 December of the third progress report on the implementation of BICI recommendations.”
