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R E M A R K S

by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton at the end of her visit to Kyiv, Ukraine

"Let me start by saying that I'm pleased to be back in Kyiv. It is especially important because as President of the Foreign Affairs Council I will be chairing our meeting on Monday when the 28 EU Foreign Ministers will gather in Brussels for our regular discussions – and the first item that I've put on the agenda is a discussion about the situation here in Ukraine.

I want to thank all of the interlocutors, those I've met both at the Munich Security Conference where I caught up with a number of people from Ukraine, and also in the last days that I've been here.

I've discussed a number of elements with everyone and I've been very struck by the fact that the issues, which have been raised by practically all of the interlocutors I've had, have been the same.

The first is that although there is a sense of violence decreasing, there is still great concern about the situation on the ground, great concern to see that those who have committed violence are brought to justice and a great desire to see some kind of transparent and independent process to achieve that. I've made clear that we're more than willing to help and support such a process, which I do think is extremely important.

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A lot of discussion too about constitutional reform, both in the Parliament and across the political leadership of the country. This seems to be an area where there is an understanding that what needs to happen is reforms that would in a way go back to elements of the 2004 Constitution, but would also need to recognise changes that could and should be made. Again, from our perspective, we are more than content to provide expertise and advice. We have – both in the European Union and other bodies with whom we are connected – the capacity to provide support to achieve that. And that seems to be an area which would provide some security to people – that stability was returning.

And of course we talked about economic issues. I've talked many times in the course of the last month about the importance of supporting the economy in Ukraine. Not unconditionally – it is really important to see the sort of economic reforms that will be necessary, because this is real economic support and investment. That means it's not only about the short term, it's about the long term. It's about the capacity of the economy not just to grow in areas that are doing well already, but also to develop in other areas too. And I've made it clear in all of my discussions that we want to see economic support for the country under those conditions.

What I would say is that all of my conversations lead me to believe that everyone understands what these elements are and what needs to happen. All I can now do is urge those who have the ability to do so to really get this conversation moving, to get the dialogue going and to set up the things that need to be done in order that the country can move out of crisis and move forward in a positive way.

Thank you."
