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A D D R E S S

**by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton at the UN Security
Council on the cooperation between the EU and the UN on
international peace and security**

"Mr President,

Thank you so much for inviting me to address the Security Council today.

Can I congratulate the Republic of Lithuania for its Presidency and its membership of the Council – the first time it serves on this distinguished body – as well as Chad, Chile, Jordan and Nigeria for their election to the UN Security Council.

May I also pay tribute to the Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, a good friend and a good partner. The European Union has always supported your leadership, your efforts to reform the UN and make it more effective and the use of your good offices to mediate, engage and achieve progress in conflict and crisis situations that are of concern to all of us.

By doing this, I would like to reiterate the strong commitment of the European Union to support and work for effective multilateralism, with the United Nations at its core, in search of lasting solutions to critical international peace and security challenges.

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Our contribution is threefold :

Our direct involvement in international negotiations on behalf of the international community;

Our capacity to implement a comprehensive approach and use a wide range of tools to solve crises;

Our close work with our international and region partners, where only collective efforts can deliver results.

Mr President,

In my role as High Representative, I'm responsible for leading on the Iranian Nuclear issue. Based on the mandate I received from the Security Council, together with the E3+3, we are engaging in intensive diplomatic efforts to seek a negotiated solution that meets the international community's concerns on the Iranian nuclear programme.

Our strength and credibility derives from the unity of the E3+3/P5+1, but also from the support received from the international community. I'm grateful for the constant support of UN Security Council and I also appreciate the progress that's been achieved between Iran and the IAEA.

We are now implementing the Joint Plan of Action agreed in Geneva last November which is the first confidence building step to address the most urgent concerns on the Iranian nuclear programme. But it is only the first step and we will start discussions next week in Vienna aimed at achieving a comprehensive and final settlement.

Mr President,

I feel proud of our work last year, facilitating the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. Historical progress was made in the normalization of relations between the two sides. The Council had the opportunity to hear Prime Minister Dacic and Prime Minister Thaci addressing the Council on Monday of this week and you will know from them how important and positive this work has been for their people, for the stability of the Western Balkans region and for its European future.

From the beginning of this Dialogue I have facilitated 22 meetings between Prime Ministers. Meetings that have lasted in total 226 hours. The last meeting took place just two days ago.

This has been a process with concrete results that have changed people's everyday lives on the ground. The First agreement of principles governing the normalization of relations reached last April was a turning point in their relations. Its implementation included the successful holding of Kosovo-wide local elections, including for the first time in northern Kosovo, and the integration of all security and justice structures into the Kosovo legal framework.

Because of this progress, the EU was able to respond by opening accession negotiations with Serbia and launching negotiations for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Kosovo. In the future, the dialogue will become more and more part of the EU integration process for both parties.

But the message to Pristina and Belgrade today is that it is crucial that the dialogue continues, and that they maintain the same commitment. The European Union and my own commitment remains as strong as ever.

Apart from the clear benefits for each side, we hope this dialogue can and should be an inspiration for positive changes, for a new momentum, in other parts of the Western Balkans. I think particularly of events in Bosnia & Herzegovina today.

Mr President,

A particular strength of the EU is its ability to use a broad toolbox of instruments and policies that we – collectively with its Member States – have at our disposal. We strive to put into practice in close cooperation with international, regional and local partners our work on all phases of conflict – from prevention and early warning, to conflict management, post-conflict transition and sustainable development.

This comprehensive approach has best been exemplified in dealing with crises in Africa, where our cooperation with the United Nations and the African Union has been instrumental to achieve results.

In Somalia, we work with our partners and make use of a wide range of tools and resources in support of stability, security and development.

With the help of the EU ATALANTA mission, piracy has dropped by about 95% in about 3 years. We are helping to build up maritime capacity and train Somali security forces. We are deeply engaged diplomatically and politically, and as Somalia's biggest donor we are a key partner for development assistance. The "New Deal" that the EU, Somalia and partners set out in September last year forms the basis of our engagement with the country, to accompany Somalia's transition.

We continue to be a steadfast supporter of the UN mission in the country. I also urge all of you to continue to support AMISOM and the Somali National Armed Forces as they step up their operations against Al-Shabaab.

One thing is certain, Mr President - as we seek to empower Somalia politically, we must do so by empowering its institutions and its people, across the country. That means we will have to link together political processes, security and justice systems, economic growth, and service delivery so that we empower and enable the Somali government to carry out its sovereign functions.

Mr President,

I want to thank the Secretary-General for his personal commitment to the Sahel region and I welcome the UN Sahel Strategy. The Secretary General's mission to Mali, where my colleague, the Development Commissioner Andris Piebalgs also participated, was an important signal. So was the visit of this Council earlier this month.

We have demonstrated, from the beginning of the crisis, our willingness to help Mali and the countries in the wider Sahel-Sahara region. We have provided humanitarian assistance to Mali up to €550m in 2013 and 2014. We have pledged €1.28bn in development aid to Mali that has already started to be committed.

Our two crisis management missions in Niger and Mali have delivered encouraging results, but it will take time and determination to build capacity. A complementary civilian mission is under preparation that will help to provide support to the internal security forces of Mali as they fight against terrorism and illegal trafficking, while contributing to the reform of the security sector at large.

Mr President,

As the Secretary General has said we remain deeply concerned about the heavy civilian casualties, massive displacements of people, human rights violations and a worsening of the humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic. It is imperative for the international community to act to enable a lasting solution to be found.

African countries and France responded swiftly, through the deployment of the MISCA and Sangaris forces. We will play our part in helping the Central African Republic by sending a crisis management mission to contribute to stability of the ground and the protection of civilians in the Bangui area. Our aim must be to ensure humanitarian aid can reach those who need it the most.

To re-establish the rule of law, a gendarmerie component will be embedded in the European force, which will facilitate cooperation on the ground. In parallel, the EU is setting up programs aiming at a swift reinstallation of the judiciary system, fully respecting local ownership. This is a crucial component. It will help us to sustain local progress on ending impunity to perpetrators of violations and enabling reconciliation.

I believe the task is immense. We will work closely with the African-led MISCA and the French forces already in the country and provide a bridging operation towards a proposed handover to the African Union, with which we have established good cooperation which continues. Should this Council decide that a full UN peacekeeping operation is best suited to take on this task, we will be happy to work with you to ensure a well-coordinated international support operation.

Mr President,

More and more the most difficult challenges to international peace and security require that we join forces. We therefore are working closely with international, regional and local partners.

The disastrous conflict in Syria continues. We are determined to support the efforts to try and find a way out of this terrible situation. The Geneva negotiations, I pay tribute Lakhdar Brahimi, are a crucial first step if we are to see confidence built around tangible results and relief for the population. This will be challenging.

As Valerie Amos reminded the Council yesterday, with 9.3 million Syrians in need of outside assistance, half of them children, we are reaching the limits of what the international community can do. Neighbouring countries are sheltering close to 3 million refugees. We will continue to support them, but the dangers for Lebanon and for Jordan, as well as threats to the territorial integrity of Iraq are real and increasing.

At the recent conference hosted by Kuwait, we pledged an additional €550m for the relief effort raising its overall contribution to €2.6bn. Yet, the UN's unprecedented fundraising appeal of €6.5bn – of which only a third has yet been reached – clearly shows the urgency of settling the conflict in order to move forward.

But we will continue our humanitarian efforts. We will continue to press all parties to allow the delivery of humanitarian aid and medical care country wide, and to allow civilians to evacuate.

We are deeply concerned that there are delays in the transfer process of the chemical weapons out of Syria. We are strong supporters of the Secretary General's efforts. We and our Member States have provided significant contributions to the OPCW, with armoured vehicles and with contributions to the trust fund.

Mr President,

Sustainable peace has far too often proven to be elusive in the Middle East. We commend the leadership shown by President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu and we fully support the tireless efforts of US Secretary of State, John Kerry. We stand ready to support and contribute substantially to post-conflict arrangements to ensure the sustainability and implementation of a peace agreement.

In December, the EU offered an unprecedented package of European political, economic and security support to the Palestinians and Israelis in the context of a final status agreement. That includes Special Privileged Partnership with the EU, aiming amongst other things to increase access to European markets, closer cultural and scientific links, facilitation of trade and investment, promotion of business relations. All of this in the event of a final peace agreement. It is a genuine and tangible European offer. And we look forward to a future relationship between ourselves and the two parties to help develop a positive interdependence and a new mutually beneficial, peaceful relationship. The role of other

regional actors is essential and I want to reiterate the strategic importance of the Arab Peace Initiative in securing a wider peace.

But for the negotiations to succeed there needs to be an increase in mutual trust between the parties. Any violence must be avoided at all costs. Incidents of violence in the Occupied Territory, continuous rocket fire to Israel, the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza, incitement as well as actions that undermine the status quo of the holy sites, they all push agreement further away. In that context of course, I cannot but deplore the continuing Israeli expansion of settlements. They are illegal under international law and they constitute a significant obstacle to peace.

Mr President,

There are many other issues of concern to the European Union which may not be on top of your agenda, but that are on the top of mine and it would be remiss of me not to mention just a couple of them here. At the moment we are worried about the situation in our own neighbourhood, especially Ukraine and Egypt. We feel a special responsibility to help these countries find a way out of their current difficulties.

I have been to Ukraine 3 times in the last 2 months and have seen people who have been standing on the streets of Kiev for the last 85 days, in support of the country's modernisation and progress. I commend the peaceful nature of the demonstrations; and I condemn strongly the expressions of violence that have occurred and continue to occur in the country. Those who have committed violence need to be brought to justice. Those who carry the responsibility to protect the Ukrainian people's rights to free speech and assembly need to ensure that these rights are safeguarded, in compliance with Ukraine's own international commitments.

We hope that a negotiated way out of the current political crisis can be found soon, the elements for that are in place. We stand ready to work with all parties within Ukraine and with the relevant international organisations to facilitate a solution. However, this has to be a Ukrainian owned and a Ukrainian led process.

Democracy-building in Egypt also requires hard work, commitment and compromise. The aim is to achieve democratic, transparent and accountable institutions that protect all citizens of Egypt and their fundamental rights.

Three years have passed since Egyptian women and men from all walks of life rose up, calling for freedom, human dignity, social justice and better economic conditions. Throughout that period, the European Union has stood by the Egyptian people.

We follow with great concern the violent events and loss of life, before and during the constitutional referendum, and on the occasion of the third anniversary of the Egyptian revolution. I have condemned in the clearest possible terms all acts of violence, as well as terrorist attacks. I have also condemned the disproportional use of force and supported the call for an investigation. We are concerned about the detention of political dissidents and journalists. Freedom of expression, assembly and peaceful protest must be safeguarded.

We believe the ratification of the new Constitution by the referendum is a positive step in implementing the road map, especially the human rights chapter including freedom of assembly, expression and women's rights. The Constitution should be applied in a way that ensures full civilian control over the branches of government. But the process was flawed by the lack of a truly representative drafting process, and the lack of political space for dissenting opinion.

We welcome the announcement of elections which should lead to a democratically elected President and a fair representation of different political views in the future parliament. We have been invited to observe the upcoming elections. An EU Election Observation Mission will be able to assess whether conditions are conducive for inclusion, transparency and credible elections. We are concerned too about the deteriorating economic situation in Egypt. Economic justice and a better life for all Egyptians is a prerequisite for a stable and prosperous country. We will continue to provide socio-economic support to poorest and most vulnerable groups of society and we will assist Egypt's vibrant civil society. We stand ready to work with the people of Egypt into the future.

Mr President,

This will be, I think, the last time as High Representative that I address this Council. May I thank you so much for the honour of being able to do so. I am very proud that we are a reliable partner of the United Nations and of this esteemed Council.

Thank you. "
