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R E M A R K S

Remarks by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton following the extraordinary Foreign Affairs Council on Ukraine

"I convened the extraordinary Foreign Affairs Council today in light of the really grave deterioration of the situation in Ukraine.

I have also asked three Foreign Ministers – Minister Steinmeier, Minister Fabius and Minister Sikorski – to travel to Kyiv and meet with President Yanukovych and leaders of the opposition. You will know that I have been at the Iran talks leading the negotiations there. The Ministers are still in the country and continue with the meetings, but I am in constant touch with them and have updated the ministers here.

In the debate at the Council today the ministers expressed their dismay with the deteriorating situation. They condemned in the strongest terms all use of violence; our thoughts are with the families of the victims.

It is absolutely clear that this violence is completely unacceptable and must stop immediately. Any further escalation must be avoided. Those responsible for Human Right violations should be brought to justice.

We call on all sides to engage in an inclusive and meaningful dialogue to deescalate the situation and find a political solution. The prime responsibility for starting such a dialogue lies with the President.

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Elements for any lasting solution include formation of a new and inclusive government, constitutional reform and creation of conditions for democratic elections.

The European Union remains ready to support Ukraine in the process of political dialogue. Our offer of political association and economic integration remains on the table, as well as our commitment to enhance people to people contacts.

But in light of the deteriorating situation the EU decided as a matter of urgency we need to look at targeted sanctions. We also agreed to suspend export licences for equipment for internal repression.

We have asked the relevant working bodies in the Council to make the necessary preparations immediately. That implementation will be taken forward in the light of developments in Ukraine.

We will continue to work in close cooperation with the international community, and we look to a lasting, inclusive solution of this crisis."
