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R E M A R K S

Opening remarks by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton at the meeting of the Heads of States of the Republic of Belarus, Republic of Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Ukraine and Representatives of the European Union

"Thank you Mr President,

Can I first of all thank you for giving us this opportunity and for your hospitality here today. As you know Mr President I'm here to represent the European Union, and I have with me two distinguished Commissioners, Commissioner De Gucht who is responsible for Trade and Commissioner Oettinger who is responsible for Energy, both of whom have been actively engaged in the issues that have arisen in our discussions with Ukraine and with some of the nations represented here and perhaps especially with Russia.

I wanted to make two or three very brief remarks to begin. Mr President my interest, as I believe yours is, is to try and support the people of Ukraine to find peace and security, to ensure that they are able to enjoy territorial integrity, a future that is economically viable, sustainable and growing, and good relations with the neighbours and with the region. I believe that should be all of our objective for this occasion.

The second thing I wanted to say is that, as the European Union, we know very well how important it is to ensure there is an opportunity for dialogue, to resolve challenges, differences and conflicts through finding political solutions. And to do so in the best possible spirit. I hope that is the spirit that will govern these discussions.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS:

Michael Mann +32 498 999 780 - +32 2 584 9780- Michael.Mann@eeas.europa.eu @EUHighRepSpox
Maja Kocijancic +32 498 984 425 - +32 2 298 65 70 - Maja.Kocijancic@ec.europa.eu @AshtonSpox Maja
Sebastien Brabant +32 460 75 09 98 - Sebastien.Brabant@ec.europa.eu
Eamonn Prendergast +32 460 75 32 93 – Eamonn.Prendergast@ec.europa.eu

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And the third thing I wanted to say is that our contribution is to help. We wish to ensure that what we do is supportive and helpful for the people of Ukraine, that it works in a way that ensures people can enjoy this future. And in a collaborative way with those of us who are also here to engage in that process. And I hope that this meeting will be a success in itself, but also will enable us to move forward.

Thank you."
