



Luxembourg , 21 October 2013  
131021/04

## R E M A R K S

### **by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton following the Foreign Affairs Council**

*"We've just had a very good working lunch with Aung San Suu Kyi, who met with the ministers on my invitation. We were especially interested to discuss how we can support the democratic transition in Myanmar/Burma. You know that we've already lifted our sanctions, that we've reinstated GSP duty free and quota free access, that we are doubling our development aid and we are supporting the peace process. But we recognize there is much more to be done to complete this process, this transition to democracy.*

*And particularly we recognize there is a lot to do on constitutional change to get ready for the free and fair elections in 2015 and also to ensure that other elements for the move forward can be successfully carried out.*

*I'll be visiting the country in November. We have a Task Force there; this is the first time we've taken this idea of a Task Force away from our neighbourhood. We'll be taking with us members of the business community, we'll be taking with us members of the European Parliament.*

*We'll be discussing a range of questions from business to business, to the growth of civil society, to how changes can be made. We'll be meeting with government ministers, visiting both Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw and having the opportunity to engage at all levels with parliament and with the government.*

*We began the meeting this morning with a discussion on the preparation for the Eastern Partnership Summit which is in Vilnius on 28 and 29 November. There is no question that the debate showed and confirmed the ambitions we have for the summit and there is no question too that we will make every effort to make it a success, to strengthen and deepen our collaboration with our Eastern Partners individually as well as a group - and the summit should open a new chapter in the relationships that we have.*

#### FOR FURTHER DETAILS:

Michael Mann +32 498 999 780 - +32 2 584 9780- [Michael.Mann@eeas.europa.eu](mailto:Michael.Mann@eeas.europa.eu) @EUHighRepSpox  
Maja Kocijancic +32 498 984 425 - +32 2 298 65 70 - [Maja.Kocijancic@ec.europa.eu](mailto:Maja.Kocijancic@ec.europa.eu) @AshtonSpox Maja  
Sebastien Brabant +32 460 75 09 98 - [Sebastien.Brabant@ec.europa.eu](mailto:Sebastien.Brabant@ec.europa.eu)

Follow us on Twitter [@eu\\_eeas](https://twitter.com/eu_eeas)

[www.facebook.com/EuropeanExternalActionService](http://www.facebook.com/EuropeanExternalActionService)

[www.eeas.europa.eu](http://www.eeas.europa.eu)

*We have also started to review the progress Ukraine has made in fulfilling the benchmarks. As you know, we remain committed to trying to move forward with each of the partners, up to Vilnius, beyond Vilnius, and to be prepared for what should happen next with each one.*

*We also spent some time discussing our Southern Neighbourhood. I had the chance to debrief the ministers on my most recent visit to Egypt, where I met again with representatives of the different groups in society, including this time the Grand Imam and Coptic Pope.*

*I expressed the desire to continue the strong partnership that we have with Egypt, our determination to push forward in assisting its transition to the democratic future that people went to Tahrir Square in January 2011 to gain. And continuing to support the most needy in Egypt and of course civil society.*

*We also recognize the great challenges in Sinai and the threat that has been posed by recent terrorist attacks. I also underlined to ministers the importance of the need to reach out. That outreach needs to continue and there needs to be an inclusive political process. And as always, we looked to the government to lift the state of emergency as soon as possible and to release those held without charge.*

*The process of constitutional reform is moving ahead but, again, we want to see that come into being and we are hoping to receive an invitation to observe the referendum that will take place once the constitution is put forward to the people.*

*As always, we talked about the deteriorating situation in Syria. From recent reports from those who have visited on my behalf, we are very conscious of disease and real terrible malnutrition becoming a serious problem there.*

*You know that I have said consistently - and the US has said it consistently - that we need to get a political solution and we, more than ever, call for what we have called Geneva II to take place. So I hope this can happen in the course of November. There is no alternative to finding that political solution.*

*I am very pleased too to see that progress has been made in dealing with the chemical weapons. We have been contributing to the work that is going on the ground by providing the armoured vehicles that they need, and we have been providing logistical support and we will continue to do so. But we are also extremely aware of the humanitarian crisis that is happening there. We continue to be the biggest donor: our aid stands at almost 2 billion euros in total and you will see from the Council conclusions that we have also agreed common EU messages on humanitarian aspects.*

*We have also talked about Libya and we reiterated our determination to support the political transition. It's a very challenging security situation, highlighted perhaps especially by the abduction of the Prime Minister recently. Of course we are also very well aware of the Lampedusa tragedy which is underlining the challenges to be faced.*

*We express our sorrow for the victims and we recognise the courage of those who have been rescuing people in very difficult circumstances. I attended the recent Justice and Home Affairs Council, where there was a discussion about increasing the strength of our migration cooperation and I know later in the week this will be an issue that will be covered on the European Council agenda.*

*Thank you."*