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Statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton on the decisions by the League of Arab States on Syria

Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the Commission, issued the following statement today:

"Yesterday the Foreign Affairs Ministers of the Arab League took significant decisions to increase the international pressure on the Syrian regime. I welcome these decisions and the strong commitment and leadership that the Arab League is taking to resolve the crisis in Syria.

The EU's first goal is an immediate cessation of violence and therefore I am very supportive of any initiative that can help achieve this objective including a stronger Arab presence on the ground in cooperation with the UN to achieve a peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis. I have been in regular contact with the Secretary Generals of the Arab League and the UN in order to discuss how this can be set in motion as soon as possible.

The Arab League has once again made a strong appeal to the UN Security Council. I renew my urgent calls on all members of the Security Council to act responsibly at this crucial moment.

I also welcome the proposal to increase economic pressure on the Syrian regime, which will add to the efforts that the EU is undertaking in this field. The EU is planning to adopt a new round of sanctions and restrictive measure at the meeting of EU Foreign ministers on 27 February.

I equally welcome and will play an active part in the Group of Friends of Syria, aiming at building an international consensus on Syria and putting forward urgent proposals to stop the violence, alleviate the suffering of the Syrian population, seek a peaceful outcome to the current crisis and promote a new era of democratic change."

P R E S S

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