Brussels, 09 March 2014
140309/01

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

R E M A R K S

by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton at the press conference with Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif, Tehran, 09/03/2014

Thank you Minister Zarif. You and I meet often now in the discussions on the nuclear issue, but this is as you rightly say the first occasion when we have met in the bilateral capacity of the High Representative of the European Union and the Foreign Minister of Iran. I want to say thank you for your invitation to come here and for your courtesy and a very useful and fruitful meeting.

As you have said, this was our opportunity to discuss issues of interest and concern to us in the region, to have an opportunity to talk about the terrible situation in Syria, to focus on areas of cooperation around the future of Afghanistan - especially we talked about the problems and challenges we face with the drugs trade -, of course we raised the issue, as you have done with me, of the potential of our human rights dialogue in the future, and we talked about a way to move forward.

I consider it a really important occasion to be here in Iran and to have the opportunity to talk about these bilateral issues. And as you said, we also took a few moments to talk about issues concerning our next round of discussions in Vienna.

And I am very much looking forward to meeting with the President and with others whom I have not met yet, and to have a chance to talk with them as well on the basis of our bilateral discussions.

I came here yesterday on International Women's day and I want to say too that it was a great privilege to meet with women from Iran, and to have the chance to celebrate with

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
Nabila Massrali +32 460 75 41 75 – Nabila.Massrali@ec.europa.eu
Follow us on Twitter @eu_eeas
www.facebook.com/EuropeanExternalActionService
www.eeas.europa.eu

them International Women's day and to talk about issues for women in Iran and in Europe, and indeed across the world. Thank you.

Question to High Representative Ashton on the Iranian nuclear issue

All I would do is refer you to the agreement that we reached, the interim agreement in November and if you look at how we talked about the way forward, I think that should give you a real indication of the approach that the international community wants to take. I want to commend Minister Zarif and his team for the work that they have done. I have been engaged in discussions with Iran for nearly four years and I think this interim agreement is really really important, but not as important as a comprehensive agreement that we are currently engaged in. Difficult, challenging, there is no guarantee it will succeed, but I think it's very important with the support of the people of Iran for the work that is going on by the Minister and his team and with the support of the International Community for my work that we should aim to try and succeed.

Audio-visual material of the visit is available on Europe by Satellite (EbS) is on http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/ebs/schedule.cfm