Brussels, 26 November 2013
131126/03

S T A T E M E N T

by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the announcement by the UN Secretary-General of the date for the Geneva 2 conference on Syria

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

"I welcome the news that United Nations Secretary-General Ban-ki Moon has set the date of 22 January 2014 for the long awaited conference on Syria, the so-called Geneva 2 meeting. On many occasions I have expressed my firm support for a political solution to the conflict in Syria. The EU has been a strong supporter of Joint Special Representative Brahimi's efforts. The EU has also been working to create conditions conducive to holding the conference among all important stakeholders.

I strongly support the call of the UNSG that the eight weeks ahead of us should be used to build up confidence among the parties through the cessation of violence, humanitarian access, release of detainees and return of Syrian refugees and internally displaced people to their homes. I also hope that both sides will soon designate representatives to the talks who in a spirit of openness and responsibility for their country will work towards finding a way out of this tragic conflict, and open a new chapter in Syria's history in line with the legitimate aspirations of all Syrians to live in a country where peace, security and stability have been restored."

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