EUROPEAN UNION

Brussels, 3 June 2012

Statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton on Syria

Catherine Ashton, 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 have talked today with the Special Envoy of the UN and the League of Arab States for Syria, Kofi Annan, who has briefed me about his mission to Damascus and his contacts on the ground. We discussed our assessment of the situation and we both agreed that we are currently at a critical point in the Syrian crisis. After 15 months of bloodshed, no efforts should be spared to immediately stop all forms of violence and start a political process. We need to avoid a catastrophe.

Violence and repression cannot be the solution. Any further militarization of the conflict will bring enormous suffering to Syria and risks having a dramatic impact on the region.

I have reaffirmed the EU's full support for Mr. Annan's efforts to implement his six point plan. Once more I call upon the Syrian regime to immediately cease all forms of violence and repression and to provide its full support to the UN Supervision Mission (UNSMIS). The EU will continue to provide assistance to UNSMIS.

At the request of the EU and other partners, the UN Human Rights Council adopted on Friday a resolution condemning the deteriorating human rights situation in Syria and the horrific killings in Houla. Those responsible must be held accountable. The in-depth investigation by the independent international Commission of Inquiry on Syria into the massacre in Houla must be conducted without delay and I urge the Syrian authorities to fully cooperate with this investigation.

Furthermore I remain in close contact with our main international partners in order to coordinate all our efforts. I am now at the EU-Russia Summit and Syria is one of the key issues we will discuss. Russia's role is crucial for the success of the Annan's Plan. We want to work closely with Russia to find a way to end the violence and support Kofi Annan's six-point plan."

P R E S S

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