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Statement by the spokesperson of the High Representative Catherine Ashton on the current situation in Syria

The spokesperson of 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:

"High Representative Catherine Ashton is gravely concerned by the escalating violence in Syria. The deterioration of the security situation has led to the UN Supervision Mission (UNSMIS) to temporarily cease its operations and stay in their current locations.

It is the primary responsibility of the Syrian government to protect its citizens as well as the international mission, and to end the spiral of violence. The High Representative strongly condemns its failure to do so.

The EU calls on all parties, including the armed opposition, to cease all violence with immediate effect and allow for immediate and unhindered access to humanitarian aid. The EU also supports General Mood's call to allow the evacuation of women, children, elderly and injured from conflict zones, including the besieged city of Homs.

There is now an urgent need for united action by the international community. The High Representative calls on all members of the UN Security Council to unite and increase the international pressure to reinforce the plan of Kofi Annan and to allow for a political process to begin."

P R E S S

FOR FURTHER DETAILS:
Michael Mann +32 498 999 780 - +32 2 299 97 80 - Michael.Mann@eeas.europa.eu
Maja Kocijancic +32 498 984 425 - +32 2 298 65 70 - Maja.Kocijancic@ec.europa.eu
Sebastien Brabant +32 460 75 09 98 - Sebastien.Brabant@ec.europa.eu
COMM-SPP-HRVP-ASHTON@ec.europa.eu
www.eeas.europa.eu

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