



EUROPEAN UNION

Brussels, 3 December 2011
A 492/11

EU High Representative Catherine Ashton, at International Afghanistan Conference 2011, Bonn

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

Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the Commission, is in Bonn on Sunday and Monday to represent the European Union at the International Afghanistan Conference 2011. Coming ten years after the first Bonn Conference, the meeting brings together leaders and foreign ministers from around the world with representatives from regional and international organisations. The focus will be on international long-term engagement towards Afghanistan, the civilian aspects of the transition and support for the process of reconciliation.

Ahead of the meeting, Catherine Ashton said: "The Bonn Conference is an important gathering for an important cause: assisting Afghanistan on the road to sustainable peace and development. The EU and its Member States provide civilian assistance of 1 billion euros every year, as well as helping the build-up of civilian police through the work of our EUPOL mission. My main messages for the conference are that the EU will remain engaged and that we want to build a long-term partnership with Afghanistan. In return, we want to see Afghanistan continue to work on improving governance, strengthening democracy and protecting human rights, especially for women."

The EU recently agreed a negotiating mandate for a Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development with Afghanistan. This will establish for the first time a legally-binding and coherent framework for the EU's relationship with the country.

The EU has also agreed an extension of the EUPOL mission until the end of 2014.

The EU and its Member States are committed to maintaining civilian funding at least at current levels to underpin the Cooperation Agreement.

During her time in Bonn, Catherine Ashton will participate in a breakfast meeting with Afghan women, alongside US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and hold talks with UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon.

P R E S S

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