



EUROPEAN UNION

Brussels, 27 June 2012
A 295/12

Statement by the spokesperson of High Representative Catherine Ashton following her meeting with President of Armenia

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

"High Representative Catherine Ashton discussed today in Brussels with the President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan the recent evolution of EU-Armenia bilateral relations, and reviewed the implementation of internal reforms in Armenia. She welcomed the efforts by the Armenian authorities to hold the recent parliamentary elections in a more transparent and competitive environment, but highlighted the need to address a number of issues, identified by the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission's Report, in order fully to meet internationally recognized democratic standards well ahead of presidential elections scheduled for 2013.

The High Representative also welcomed recent reform achievements in Armenia as reflected in the European Neighbourhood (ENP) Progress Report published on 15 May. She noted with pleasure that Armenia had recently launched Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area negotiations with the EU, having implemented a number of recommendations from the European Commission. At the same time she stressed the need for further reforms in other areas such as human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Catherine Ashton expressed her concern at the serious armed incidents in early June along the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the Line of Contact in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and regretted the loss of life as well as the hardship of those affected by the conflict. She urged Armenia and Azerbaijan, as partner countries, to step up their efforts to reach agreement on the Madrid principles, as a basis for peace, and to implement fully the commitments made by their Presidents in the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group. The High Representative added that progress in the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is vital if Armenia's political association and economic integration with the EU is to achieve its full potential."

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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