



S047/06

**Javier SOLANA,
EU High Representative for the CFSP,
met Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu,
Secretary-General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference
in Jeddah, on 13 February 2006**

Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), met Dr Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary-General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in Jeddah today on the first stop of his tour of the Middle East covering Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinian Territories and Israel. Following their discussions last week and their joint statement with the United Nations Secretary-General issued on 7 February 2006, Dr Solana and Dr Ihsanoglu discussed the way forward to renewing the dialogue between Europeans and the Muslim World.

Dr Solana made the following introductory statement at the joint press conference with the OIC Secretary-General:

"I am pleased to be in Jeddah today at an important moment for both the European Union and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and for the people and countries that we represent. I thank the Secretary-General of the OIC for our constructive meeting. We have discussed how we can work together to build bridges, to renew our dialogue, and to reconstruct the close relationship between Europeans and the Muslim World.

My message here on behalf of the Europeans is one of profound respect for Islam. I expressed our sincere regret that religious feelings have been hurt. The Secretary-General and I discussed how to reach out to our communities to make sure that people's hearts and minds are not hurt again. We have agreed on the importance of mutual tolerance and the inadmissibility of violence. Offence cannot be countered with violence. This is unacceptable.

We must not allow the latest events to erode the solid relationship we have built up over so many years. We need each other, we have to work together, and we have to respect each other.

The EU and the OIC, together with the United Nations, worked closely together last week to find a way out of the difficult situation and to renew dialogue and mutual understanding. We are committed to continuing to do so".

After his meetings in Jeddah, the High Representative continued to Riyadh to meet the Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Saud Al-Faisal and to be received by His Majesty the King, Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud. In Riyadh, Dr. Solana will also meet the Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Abdulrahman Bin Hamad Al-Attiyah.

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