



EUROPEAN UNION

Brussels, 29 August 2011  
A 337/11

## High Representative Catherine Ashton concludes her visit in Israel

**Catherine Ashton, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, has today concluded her visit to Israel. On Sunday she has met with President Shimon Peres, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Defence Minister Ehud Barak and Kadima Chairwoman Tzipi Livni, while today she had a meeting with Foreign Minister and Deputy PM Avigdor Liberman.**

*"I came to Israel to discuss how we move forward with peace negotiations. I believe the changes we witnessed in the neighbourhood, changes in countries around Israel, give even more momentum to the need to try and find solution that will enable the people of Israel and the people of Palestine to live in peace and security together. We have a real opportunity to see what more can be done to take this forward and find ways in which both countries could find the future together,"* said Catherine Ashton of her visit to Israel.

*"Israel has seen violence in the last days and the EU has condemned these acts of terrorism,"* she also said. *"The security of the people of Israel is a top priority for the EU and negotiations are the best way forward to find a lasting solution to the conflict that ensures that two states live in peace and security."*

Catherine Ashton repeated the call for the immediate release of the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, who was celebrating his 25th birthday on Sunday. *"Gilad Shalit is still in captivity. I share the desire to see him home long before his next birthday. My thoughts are with his parents,"* said Catherine Ashton.

High Representative Ashton came to Israel from the visit to occupied Palestinian authority and will end her travel to the Middle East on Monday with the visit to Jordan.

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**P R E S S**

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