



EUROPEAN UNION

Brussels, 27 April 2012
A 197/12

Catherine Ashton visits Burma/Myanmar to open a new chapter in the relationship

Burma/Myanmar, 27 April 2012 - Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the Commission, will travel to Burma/Myanmar from 28 to 30 April. She will inaugurate the Office of the European Union to Burma/Myanmar in Yangon on 28 April and hold meetings with President U Thein Sein as well as Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

"The European Union welcomes the remarkable changes in Burma/Myanmar and has decided to open a new chapter in our relations. We have suspended the sanctions with the exception of the arms embargo. Of course reforms need to continue - we need to see further progress, in particular the unconditional release of all political prisoners and efforts to end ethnic conflicts. We are ready to assist with these efforts as well as with economic and social development. We will continue to support the democratic transition, including through electoral assistance, and encourage trade and investment in the country.

These are the messages I will pass on to both the representatives of the government and the opposition, including the President and Aung Sun Suu Kyi. While in Burma/Myanmar, I will also open the EU office, which will help us support Burma/Myanmar on its path to full democracy," said Catherine Ashton ahead of the visit.

During her visit to the country, the High Representative will also meet with the Ministers for Foreign Affairs (U Wunna Maung Lwin); Industry (U Soe Thein); Border Affairs (Major General Thein Htay); and Railways (U Aung Min), the Speaker of the Lower House (Thura Shwe Mann) and the Secretary General of the USDP (U Htay Oo). She will also meet the Generation 88 students and representatives of civil society and visit the headquarters of the National League of Democracy (NLD).

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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Background

The visit of the High Representative marks a new beginning in the bilateral relations between the European Union and Myanmar. On 23 April 2012, the Council of the European Union suspended restrictive measures imposed on the Government (with the exception of the arms embargo), as a means to welcome and encourage the on-going reform process. The Council will monitor closely the situation on the ground, keep its measures under constant review and respond positively to progress on on-going reforms. The EU wants to enter into an active collaboration with Burma/Myanmar as a whole, with a view to assisting the reform process and contributing to economic, political and social development.

More information:

Foreign Affairs Council of 23 April: [CONSILIUM - Highlights](#)

Media advisory:

Europe by Satellite (EBS) will provide audio-visual coverage of the visit. There will be photo-opportunities at the beginning of various meetings and several press points. Media can also obtain access to the opening of the EU Office in Yangon, but prior registration (via the EU Delegation in Bangkok) is necessary due to the limited space.

[Saturday 28 April](#)

HR/VP Catherine Ashton will visit the headquarters of the National League for Democracy (NLD) in Yangon and then meet with Ms Aung San Suu Kyi. She will also be meeting with the Myanmar Civil Society and Generation 88. She will open the new EU Office in Yangon.

[Sunday 29 April](#)

HR/VP Catherine Ashton will travel to Nay Pyi Taw where she will meet the Foreign Affairs of Myanmar, Mr U Wunna Maung Lwin, as well as the Ministers for Industry (U Soe Thein), Border Affairs (Major General Thein Htay) and Railways (U Aung Min).

[Monday 30 April](#)

[On 30 April](#), HR/VP Catherine Ashton will meet, in Nay Pyi Taw, with the President of Burma, Mr U Thein Sein, followed by a meeting with the Lower House Speaker, Mr Thura Shwe Mann, and the Secretary General of Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), Mr U Htay Oo. She will then return to Yangon where she will conclude the visit with a press conference.