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## Statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on International Women's Day, 8 March 2013

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

*"Today we celebrate International Women's Day. Women around the world are striving to shape the future of their countries, societies and families and to fight for civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, free from fear and violence. Wherever I travel, I meet courageous women who are fighting for an equal role in the democratic future of their countries. They are an inspiration to me, the women of the European Union and women all across the world. I take the opportunity today to salute them.*

*Today, more than 5,000 people have gathered in New York to discuss the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls in the margins of the 57th session of the UN Commission of the Status of Women. Violence against women and girls is a worldwide phenomenon, crossing all borders, all generations, all nationalities, and all communities. Yet it remains hidden, under-reported, under-prosecuted, and under-punished. This trend must be reversed. The EU will work tirelessly to achieve widespread agreement on the Conclusions against all forms of violence against women. Over the last decade, the EU has supported more than 100 projects directly targeting violence against women and girls, worth a total of 80 million Euros. This includes the EU Daphne programme that finances civil society, universities and local authorities in their daily work to combat violence and support victims.*

*Now is the time to accelerate progress towards the achievement of gender equality, by joining forces to build the future for all men and women in peace and prosperity."*

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**P R E S S**

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