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Statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton following her meeting with Moroccan Foreign Minister Dr Saad-eddine El Othmani

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

"I was delighted to welcome Dr Saad-eddine El Othmani to Brussels today on his first official visit as Moroccan Foreign Minister.

Morocco is a key partner in the EU neighbourhood, as recognised by its Advanced Status. I welcome the positive steps taken in recent months to intensify our existing cooperation still further, in particular through the agreement of an EU-Morocco Action Plan 2013-2017; the first round of negotiations for a Deep & Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA); and the political declaration for a Mobility Partnership, which Foreign Minister El Othmani will sign in Luxembourg tomorrow with Commissioner Malmström and the Interior Ministers of 9 Member States.

I commend the Moroccan Government's commitment to an ambitious reform programme. I am following with close interest planned reforms concerning women's issues, including a Government Plan for Equality. I encourage the Moroccan Government to move swiftly towards implementation of these and other key reforms to which it is committed, in the fields of justice, the economy and the media.

The EU will continue to support Morocco's reform process through European Neighbourhood funding, of which Morocco is the largest recipient, and other instruments such as SPRING and the European Investment Facility.

P R E S S

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I also wish to thank Morocco for its continued constructive approach to international efforts to resolve instability in the Sahel and in Syria, including its recent contribution for development and reconstruction in Mali."
