



EUROPEAN UNION

New York, 26 September 2013
A 479/13

**Remarks by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton
following the meeting of E3+3 Foreign Ministers
with the Iranian Foreign Minister**

Thanks everyone.

This has been a meeting to which I was pleased to invite Minister Zarif, a meeting of the E3+3 at Ministerial level with political directors, convened and chaired by myself. It was a substantial meeting, with a good atmosphere, energetic.

We had a discussion about how we would go forward with an ambitious timeframe, to see whether we can make progress quickly. I am pleased that we have agreed to meet in Geneva on the 15 and 16 of October, to pursue the agenda, to carry on from today's meeting and to hopefully move this process forward.

I want to thank Minister Zarif for coming to the meeting and for talking openly and very much look forward to pursuing this in Geneva shortly.

The substantial part of the discussion was to have an opportunity to hear from the Foreign Minister of Iran his thinking about how to move forward and, within that, to look at what kind of timetable and to begin the conversation about where this will all end up. As you will appreciate, we want to spend our time in Geneva now, translating that in a sense into the practical details.

Like the Minister, I am very ambitious for what we can do, but we all know that we have to be very practical in translating political ambition into what does that mean for the effective work that we do on the ground; that is what we really need to focus on now.

First of all, we have put a confidence-building measures proposal on the table in order to do everything we could to try and get this moving. It remains on the table. And either the Iranian government can decide to respond directly to that or it can put forward its own proposals.

P R E S S

FOR FURTHER DETAILS:

Michael Mann +32 498 999 780 - +32 2 584 9780 - 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
Nabila Massrali +32 460 754 175 - +32 2 29 69218 - Nabila.Massrali@ec.europa.eu

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What we've asked for is that if we can have as much notice as possible of ideas before we get to Geneva, we'll be in a better position to properly respond, so we wait and see. I can't predict what will happen on that yet.

The E3+3 meets at Ministerial level traditionally now at the General Assembly so the dynamic is set by the governments of all of the six nations working together throughout the year. Certainly it was very interesting for the Ministers to be able to talk at Ministerial level with each other, and to that extent of course having the Foreign Minister of Iran come and openly talk was of itself a change in the dynamic. All Ministers engaged with that, all had an opportunity to put their points of view and the atmosphere was a very positive one.

The purpose of today was to set the tone and to begin to think about the framework. I think the best guarantees of anything are what actually happens. We know – having spent, from my point of view, quite a long time looking at all of the detail – that there are practical things that actually need to be done. I think that's the best guarantee of the future, to see things really happen on the ground, really make a difference.

When I met with President Rouhani this morning with President Van Rompuy, and in many of the conversations that the team has had with both Ministers and the President, you will have seen a number of figures being talked about. We were interested to see that they are all of an ambitious nature. The question is how far you can go in three months or six months or twelve months, and twelve months is a good timeframe to think about some serious implementation on the ground. But for me what really matters now is that we get down to the detail and actually work out what will happen, when it will happen, how we know it's happened, how we move forward, building confidence as we go to get to that point.

The good news is that there are talks about the timetable. In other words that we are hearing figures being talked around as possibilities for the kind of timeframe in which things can happen, and that's of itself a very positive note.
