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## **Statement by Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/European Commission Vice-President on announcement by Israel on Gaza blockade**

Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, made the following statement today:

*"Today's announcement by the Government of Israel is another significant step forward in the review of its policy on Gaza. As I have always said, once implemented, Israel's new policy should improve the lives of the ordinary people of Gaza while addressing the legitimate security concerns of Israel.*

*While the details of the lists will have to be carefully examined, I hope that the complete implementation of these measures will allow for the reconstruction of Gaza and the revival of its economy. Private sector development and commercial activity, including exports, will be crucial for the recovery of Gaza. The movement of persons and trade between Gaza and the West Bank should remain one of the key objectives.*

*To enable the people in Gaza to reconstruct their homes, to build schools, to improve infrastructure and start new businesses, the capacity of crossings must be expanded. As stated by EU foreign ministers last week, the EU is ready to support Israel and the Palestinian Authority in the opening of land crossings.*

*I reiterate once again that Gilad Shalit must be released immediately*

*We will continue discussions and examine the details of the proposed changes and their implementation with Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the Quartet Partners."*

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**P R E S S**

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