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Kabul Conference: High Representative Catherine Ashton to reaffirm the EU's long-term commitment to Afghanistan

High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission Catherine Ashton will attend the Kabul Conference on Tuesday, 20 July. The Conference will focus on increased Afghan responsibility and ownership of its own security, governance and development, the so-called "Kabul process". HR Ashton will at the conference present plans for continued EU engagement in Afghanistan, stressing the priority areas which include sub-national governance; reform of the justice and police sectors; and human rights. The EU fully supports the peace and reconciliation process and is standing ready to support Afghan efforts to reintegrate those ready to renounce violence.

On the margins of the Kabul conference HR Ashton will also meet with President Karzai and Foreign Minister Rassoul of Afghanistan, as well as with United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. She will attend a meeting with Afghan women's organisations alongside US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Danish Foreign Minister Lene Espersen.

"The EU is keeping its promises to Afghanistan. We have a multi-annual commitment and will take steps to further align this assistance with the Afghan Government's priorities. We plan to raise our level of support in line with the new EU Action Plan." HR Ashton said ahead of the Kabul Conference.

But she added: *"Afghanistan's problems cannot be solved without stronger governance and respect for the rule of law. The key challenges are to extend the Government's authority into the provinces, and to stamp out the culture of impunity and corruption that undermine the whole governance and development process. That is why our future package will put a special focus on strengthening public administration and in particular on aiming to reform of the justice sector which will complement the EU's work with the Afghan police – helping to improve law enforcement at all levels"*.

The EU Action Plan, which was approved by the EU Foreign Ministers last October, highlights governance and rule of law as areas for enhanced EU engagement in Afghanistan in the years ahead. In the run up to the Kabul Conference, the EU underlined the importance of rolling out good governance to provincial and district level and stressed that this affected progress across the range of political, social and economic sectors.

The current EU budget assistance for Afghanistan entails multi-year commitments stretching up to 2013 and the aim will be to further align this assistance with the priorities and programmes that will be the outcome of the Conference.

In response to the signing of the Afghanistan - Pakistan Trade and Transit Agreement in Islamabad on 18 July, HR Catherine Ashton said: *"The signing of this agreement is a significant breakthrough ahead of the Kabul conference. I extend my congratulations to Afghanistan and Pakistan. The*

P R E S S

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agreement will boost regional cooperation among all of Afghanistan's neighbours and with it much needed economic growth and opportunity. The EU stands ready to further strengthen its engagement in regional cooperation." This key trade agreement will allow Afghan lorries to use a land route through Pakistan to carry goods to India. The deal also gives landlocked Afghanistan access to Pakistani ports to boost its trade with other nations.

Additional information:

[Memo on EU-Afghanistan RELATIONS: MEMO/10/345](#)

<http://www.delafg.ec.europa.eu/en/index.htm>

www.consilium.europa.eu/eupol-afghanistan

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