



EUROPEAN UNION

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Statement by the spokesperson of Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative on Côte d'Ivoire

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

High Representative Catherine Ashton considers the 'nationalization of the cocoa trade' and threats to confiscate cocoa stocks announced earlier this week by Laurent Gbagbo as illegal. Ex-president Gbagbo has no right to carry out any nationalization or confiscation of goods since he is no longer the legal president of the country. This is yet another step of state looting, following the illegal seizure of commercial banks last month. The act illustrates that Laurent Gbagbo and his collaborators are prepared to use any means at their disposal and to violate any laws and conventions to maintain power by force.

The High Representative recalls that President Ouattara has declared a temporary export ban on coffee and cocoa, in order to prevent Laurent Gbagbo from collecting money that he is using to buy weapons and hire mercenaries in order to cling on to power.

Any cocoa or other "nationalised" goods sold by Gbagbo's regime are stolen and illegal goods. EU citizens and economic operators must abstain themselves from trading with these goods. We encourage other countries to take the same approach.

The High Representative also recalls that in support of President Ouattara's efforts, the EU has imposed an asset freeze on Laurent Gbagbo, 95 of his closest collaborators and 13 economic entities (including the port of San Pedro and Abidjan) who are supporting and financing his illegal regime. Any financial transactions in favour of these entities and persons are illegal.

The High Representative urges European enterprises to continue to comply with the President Ouattara's temporary export ban and with the sanctions announced by the EU to secure a rapid transfer of power.

P R E S S

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