



EUROPEAN UNION

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**Statement by the High Representative Catherine Ashton
on the situation in Côte d'Ivoire**

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

"Today, incumbent leader Laurent Gbagbo was arrested by the Republican Forces of Côte d'Ivoire. I welcome this development, which marks a critical step in the resolution of a nearly five month post-electoral crisis. I deplore the high price the Ivorian people have had to pay to ensure the respect of their democratic will as expressed in the Presidential elections of November 2010. It is essential that law and order are restored swiftly and that all sides show restraint. Outstanding issues should be settled by due process of Law. All perpetrators of human rights abuses must be held accountable for their actions.

I welcome the action taken by the UN peacekeeping mission, UNOCI, with the assistance of the French Licorne forces to protect the civilian population in Côte d'Ivoire and call on their continued support in the immediate aftermath of the crisis to help the government re-establish security.

I also wish to commend the united position taken by African partners, particularly the African Union, ECOWAS and WAEMU, in the face of the challenges to the democratic process in Côte d'Ivoire.

I reiterate my full support to President Ouattara, his government and the people of Côte d'Ivoire in their task of reconciliation, recovery and development. The EU has already lifted sanctions on key economic entities. As a next step, we are fully committed to promoting actions to help bring peace back to the country. We will then provide long-term support to Côte d'Ivoire to promote prosperity in order to guarantee stability and help rebuild the country."

P R E S S

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