



EUROPEAN UNION

Brussels, 20 April 2011
A 160/11

Statement by Catherine Ashton, following the EU-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Joint Council and Ministerial Meeting, 20th April 2011

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

"Today's was a constructive and useful meeting at a crucial time.

The EU and GCC have many common interests. Today has shown how important it is to discuss these issues and lay the foundations for closer dialogue and cooperation, at all levels.

Recent developments in North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula are a clear demonstration of the need for closer dialogue between the EU and GCC.

I was able to brief ministers on the policies we in the EU are pursuing in our southern neighbourhood and the wider region.

The European Union's position on the changes going on is clear: we condemn violence. The only way to make progress is through dialogue and reform.

We agreed on the need to respect human rights and all fundamental freedoms.

Obviously, the world's attention is focused on Libya, and we discussed the crisis at length.

Last week, Qatar hosted the first meeting of the Contact Group on Libya.

The European Union remains resolute in seeking a rapid political transition in Libya.

P R E S S

FOR FURTHER DETAILS:

Michael Mann +32 498 999 780 - +32 2 299 97 80 - Michael.Mann@eeas.europa.eu
Maja Kocijancic +32 498 984 425 - +32 2 298 65 70 - Maja.Kocijancic@ec.europa.eu
COMM-SPP-HRVP-ASHTON@ec.europa.eu
www.eeas.europa.eu

EN

We believe that the Gaddafi regime must leave power to allow the Libyan people to determine their own future.

The EU has reacted swiftly, providing humanitarian assistance and putting economic and political pressure on the Gaddafi regime.

Once the immediate crisis is over, the EU stands ready to support the Libyan people in the longer term.

We are working in close collaboration with all our international partners - including the Arab League, the African Union, the United Nations, the Organisation of The Islamic Conference – and the GCC.

This is important for the EU, which recognizes the leading role of our Arab and African partners.

The first priority must be the protection of citizens, and clearing the way for humanitarian assistance – Europe has already provided nearly 100 million euros in humanitarian aid.

The only solution to the Libyan crisis is a political one – empowering the Libyan people through democratic processes. Here, the Transitional National Council is an important interlocutor.

We are not interested in dictating to countries, but in assisting where we can.

I listened today to the GCC's insight on these events and others in the region, and the frank discussion we had was very useful.

I want to recognize the valuable contribution the GCC is making to help resolve the crisis in Yemen.

On Iran, we expressed concern and urged Iran to play a constructive role in the region.

Today we also discussed the Middle East Peace Process. I debriefed ministers on my work with the Quartet. We agreed that it is now more urgent than ever to make urgent progress.

I just met his Majesty the King of Bahrain.

I stressed the importance of getting a meaningful dialogue going, as the best way of meeting the aspirations of the people.

This dialogue must start as soon as possible without preconditions and with full respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

It has been a very valuable meeting today. I look forward to the next Ministerial Meeting that will be held in the EU next year.

In the meantime, I look forward to getting on with the practical work in collaboration with the countries of the EU and the GCC

Thank you"