



EUROPEAN UNION

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Remarks by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton following her meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton

"Secretary Clinton, Hillary, first of all, it's always a pleasure to meet you anywhere in the world, and indeed we spend our lives finding ourselves in different parts of the globe. But it's always been a special pleasure to meet with you here in Washington. And the reason for that more than anything is it's our opportunity to have a little chance to reflect more on some of the big challenges that we are facing at the present time. Looking at the important and the immediate, but also that opportunity to discuss the longer term.

And one of the areas that I'm most engaged in now is trying to develop, for what we describe in the European Union as our own neighborhood, a much longer-term strategy and policy around the concept of what I'd call deep democracy – helping people to realize that democracy is not just about what you do when you cast your ballot, but about the building of institutions and political parties, and the capacity to go on casting your ballot in years to come.

And how we ensure that we're able to support the people in Egypt and Tunisia and in other countries too as they go forward with this democratic process. It's going to be of enormous importance. And our commitment in the European Union, along with your commitment, is to be there for that long-term challenge.

But combined with that too, we also have the longer-term challenge of ensuring the economic stability and development of these countries. And that's why for Europe, we've been developing a new program. I've called it the Three Ms.

Money – resources available for countries in the short term to deal with the economic difficulties and problems they've faced. Simply looking at Tunisia and Egypt, you can't just think of tourism alone, but also to think more creatively about using real investment from some of the institutions that we have, European Investment Bank being one of them. So those resources are there on the ground in the short term, but also for the long term.

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

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Market access – the ability to use our trade to be able to support these countries in helping their economy develop. And that means not only opening markets but ensuring that people can take advantage of those markets. Help them meet the standards that we all have for our citizens, helping them to produce the goods that we want to buy.

And then mobility, the third M. The capacity, particularly for young people – these are young societies – to be able to move around, to have education and support across countries in the European Union, many of whom have long histories of links with young people in those countries. And alongside young people, the business people that will need to be able to travel to support the trade that I've already described.

So those three Ms are the backbone of the kind of strategy that we're trying to put together now to support the neighborhood. It's new, it's bigger, it is bolder. It will, I hope, be a recognition that the European Union takes its responsibilities in its neighborhood seriously. And as I said in my second week in this job, Europe should be judged by its effectiveness in its own neighborhood, and I firmly believe that.

There are really serious issues for Syria. I spoke to the foreign minister of Syria last week and explained to him in a very detailed way how important it was to take this closing window of opportunity and change course. And we will see whether any recognition of what I said comes forward, but I have to say that we will look again at the sanctions that we've taken to ensure that they are as strong as they possibly can be.

We worry too about Yemen and call upon the president there to fulfill his obligations and to sign the agreement.

Secretary of State Clinton and I also talked about other areas, and I think particularly about Bosnia-Herzegovina, where I went last week to make it perfectly plain to President Dodik that the Dayton Agreement is here to stay and that there is an expectation that he will play his full part as a politician in that country in helping to try and move forward for the country as a whole.

And it will be very important, as I said in Bosnia, that for the people of that country that the government is formed as quickly as possible and takes its responsibilities. Rising unemployment – real challenges that are being faced there – need a government to lead for the future.

And finally Iran, where I had a recent letter from Dr. Jalili, it's taken three months for that reply to come. I had wished for a stronger and better letter from them to recognize that the offer on the table (from the E3+3) is an offer they should look at very carefully. I will be sending a reply. We'll be consulting with our partners, not least with the United States, before we do so. But I do urge Iran to think again and to consider coming back to the table.

In terms of Iran, I would like to say there will be a new round of talks. But from the letters that I've received, I don't see that at the present time."
