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Statement by the High Representative Catherine Ashton on EU-Kazakhstan relations

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

“I have met with the new Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan and had the opportunity to have a fruitful discussion on EU-Kazakhstan relations. In this framework, I welcomed the launch of the negotiations for a new enhanced agreement between the EU and Kazakhstan, on 27 June 2011 in Brussels.

Kazakhstan is a key economic and political partner for the EU. The start of these negotiations for an enhanced agreement is an important milestone in our efforts to further advance relations and strengthen the EU and its Member States’ cooperation with Kazakhstan.

As was outlined in the Joint Statement endorsed by the EU-Kazakhstan Cooperation Council in November 2009, I reminded that “closer and stronger bilateral ties must go hand in hand with adherence to the common values of democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights”. I am confident that the process of negotiating and concluding this new agreement will prove to be an important stimulus for the EU and Kazakhstan to cooperate further on ensuring progress on political reforms.

The successful conclusion of the negotiations will be influenced by the advancement of democratic reforms, notably in enhancing freedom of expression and media, freedom of association and assembly, and improvement of the conduct of electoral processes, to make them compliant with international standards.

The current Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) of 1999 between the EU and Kazakhstan will continue to remain in force until the new enhanced agreement replaces it.”

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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