



EUROPEAN UNION

Brussels, 24 January 2012
A 22/12

High Representative Catherine Ashton travels to Israel and occupied Palestinian territory

Brussels, 24 January 2012 - Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the Commission, travels to Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory from Tuesday 24th to Thursday 26th January. The visit marks the latest stage in her ongoing efforts to encourage the two sides to return to the negotiating table, in line with the Quartet statement from September. It follows the recent start of face-to-face meetings between Israeli and Palestinian negotiators in Amman.

"I look forward to talking to both Israeli and Palestinian leaders. I will continue to make every effort to push the peace talks and encourage the parties in the path towards a negotiated solution," Catherine Ashton said. "The fact that negotiators are talking to each other face-to-face is encouraging, and I'd like to express my thanks to the King of Jordan for his initiative, closely linked to the efforts by the Quartet. I'll be looking for positive signs from both sides that they are prepared to turn this progress into real gestures and negotiations. Time is of the essence. Developments in the region make peace in the Middle East even more urgent and necessary."

During the visit, the High Representative will meet Israeli President Shimon Peres, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman and Defence Minister Ehud Barak, and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad.

She will also visit the Gaza Training Center, where she will sign the Financing Agreement with UNRWA (the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East), and meet representatives of civil society.

The High Representative will give a press conference at the Gaza Training Center at ca. 11.15 on Wednesday.

Video and photographic images on the visit will be available on Europe by Satellite.

P R E S S E

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

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

Sebastien Brabant +32 498 986 433 - Sebastien.Brabant@ec.europa.eu

COMM-SPP-HRVP-ASHTON@ec.europa.eu

www.eeas.europa.eu

EN