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Statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton following her meeting with Egyptian President Morsi: EU and Egypt launch Task Force

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

"It was an honour to welcome President Mohamed Morsi to Brussels today, following my invitation on behalf of the EU during our meeting in Cairo in July. We discussed the current political situation in Egypt and the next steps with the transition.

We also discussed the worrying economic situation in Egypt, following the loss of income from tourism and Foreign Direct Investment. We looked in detail at the plan for the new EU-Egypt Task Force announced today. We agreed that the Task Force will take place on 14-15 November in Cairo. We recognise the great challenges ahead for Egypt. The Task Force is meant to act as a catalyst for collective EU support, to encourage the democratic transition and to help restore economic and investor confidence. Egypt is a country with a vital role not just in the region but in the world. The Task Force will host a tourism and business summit. It will illustrate the new Egypt's decision to have Europe as its main partner as well as Europe's renewed engagement with Egypt. Our objective is to bring the EU and the new democratic Egypt as close together as possible through cooperation in all sectors. This means political support but also economic support to tourism, job creation and investment, and the transfer of technology between industries and universities: a true political and economic partnership. Solving these challenges will bring about political and economic stability.

P R E S S

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As in the previous Task Forces, there will be strong involvement of the private sector and civil society. I also look forward to the European Parliament's participation. The Task Force is an excellent illustration of our comprehensive approach in action.

We also discussed a range of current foreign policy issues, not least the terrible situation in Syria. We spoke about the need to protect foreign embassies and condemned the despicable attack on the US Consulate in Benghazi, which killed four US public servants, including US Ambassador Christopher Stevens."
