Remarks by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton

following her visit to China

First of all this was an opportunity to meet the new leadership in China – to make contact with my interlocutors – so I was very pleased to have a meeting this morning with the Defence Minister, General Chang. This was a chance for us to catch up on the collaboration we have had, the seminar that has taken place in Brussels, the opportunities in terms of our anti-piracy work to collaborate further and the exchanges that we can have between our military personnel. I hope we’ll see advances in all of those areas, in the coming weeks and months.

I also met with the new Foreign Minister, Minister Wang. We had a chance to talk about the bilateral relationship, especially as we build up towards the 16th EU-China Summit, later this year. A real focus on some of the areas of work we have been developing – urbanisation, how we develop the rural economy, the green growth agenda – some of the areas that I think we’ll focus on at the Summit later in the year.

I met too with State Councillor Yang, the former Foreign Minister, who I have already established a good relationship with, and had a chance, with him, to talk about some of the international issues: their support for the work I am doing on the Iran talks; our concerns about what is happening in North Korea; the broader challenges in the South China Sea and of course in our own neighbourhood, the challenges in the south, especially our concerns about the growing conflict, and the terrible situation in Syria.

Overall, this was an opportunity to strengthen and deepen our economic and political ties.