



EUROPEAN UNION

Pretoria, 9 May 2011

## Press Release

.../for immediate release

### Coherence in a changing world

On May 9th the European Union marks the symbolic date when Robert Schuman put forward his ideas on a united Europe to bring lasting peace and prosperity to our continent. The core of Schuman's vision was to build Europe not by a single decision or a single design but step by step. By pooling sovereignty, and building solidarity through concrete common projects. And that is what has happened.

It is a testament to Schuman's vision and that of others that this family of democratic countries has grown in size and scope. From the original Six to twenty-seven European countries today, spreading democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights to more than 500 million European citizens. What started off as a coal and steel community and then turned into a broader economic club has since turned into an outward-looking Union with a growing role and reach, acting as a force for good in our neighbourhood and globally.

The ambition to build a credible EU foreign policy received a major boost with the launch of the European External Action Service on 1st January this year. The EEAS will act as a single platform to project European values and interests around the world. And it will act as a one-stop shop for our partners around the world.

For the first time, we are able to bring together all the tools that the EU has: diplomacy, political engagement, development assistance, humanitarian aid, economic cooperation, and civil and military crisis management. We are already putting this increased capability to good use as we face the challenges and opportunities of current developments in North Africa.

The aim in all this is forge a better, more coherent common EU foreign policy. Developing European answers to complex global problems, working with our partners around the world. This is something I know countries have long asked for - and that we can now deliver.

The message from Europe to our friends around the world is clear: we want to work together to tackle some of the biggest challenges we all face. And with the EEAS in place we will be a better, more capable partner.

We remain the biggest donor and the largest trading power in the world, but we are doing much more, and we are doing it together. We are fighting piracy off the coast of Somalia and helping rebuild Haiti following the devastating earthquake. We are mediating between Serbia and Kosovo for a lasting peace in the Western Balkans, and leading negotiations with Iran on their nuclear programme. Our 130 EU Delegations around the world are trusted partners for their host countries on all aspects of EU policy, from foreign and security policy to energy and climate change.

On Europe Day, the European Union takes the opportunity to remember where it came from. But above all, it can look at how far it has come. The European External Action Service embodies a united and strong continent. It is there to ensure security and stability for European citizens and to help spread the same throughout the world.

*By Baroness Catherine Ashton (High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and Vice-President of the European Commission)*