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**Speech by High Representative Catherine Ashton  
to the European Parliament on the creation of  
the European External Action Service**

**Strasbourg, 07 July 2010**

I am delighted to be here to discuss one of the most important issues on the European agenda - the creation of the European External Action Service.

Let me start with a word of gratitude for the constructive engagement of the Parliament and the rapporteurs – in particular Elmar Brok, Guy Verhofstadt and Roberto Gualtieri - throughout this process. And to the committees – AFET, Development, Constitutional Affairs, Budget and Budgetary Control, JURI – whose work has improved the text for the EEAS decision in many ways. And to the President of the parliament: Thank you.

We have achieved a lot together in recent weeks, building the necessary common ground among all concerned. I pay tribute to the other members of our Quadriologue, Maros Sefcovic and the Commission, and the Spanish Presidency led by Miguel Moratinos together with colleagues in the Council.

I am especially grateful to the legal services who have offered us good advice and support throughout.

Now the time has come to decide.

In recent months, there has been a lot of attention, rightly, on the institutional complexities and administrative intricacies. Laying the foundations is a critical task, but without losing sight of the reasons we are creating this service. Reasons that have become more and more obvious as I have travelled, on your behalf, to visit Governments, Military missions, our delegations and programmes across the world.

**P R E S S**

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FOR FURTHER DETAILS:

Maja Kocijancic +32 498 984 425 - +32 2 298 65 70 - [Maja.Kocijancic@ec.europa.eu](mailto:Maja.Kocijancic@ec.europa.eu)

Darren Ennis +32 498 963 293 - +32 2 296 32 93 - [Darren.Ennis@ec.europa.eu](mailto:Darren.Ennis@ec.europa.eu)

[COMM-SPP-HRVP-ASHTON@ec.europa.eu](mailto:COMM-SPP-HRVP-ASHTON@ec.europa.eu)

[www.eeas.europa.eu](http://www.eeas.europa.eu)

So before going further into the detail let me just say something about the vision for the EEAS in the future.

There is no better place than this House and no better moment than today to remind ourselves why the EEAS is so important for the EU. Why it marks a change in how we operate in a fast changing geopolitical landscape.

We cannot afford to act in a disparate manner in a world that is seeing fundamental power shifts and where problems are increasingly complex and inter-linked.

We need to defend Europe's interests and project Europe's values in a more coherent and effective way. And we should be ambitious in how we do it.

The European Union and the Member-States have an impressive array of instruments, resources, relationships and expertise to help build a better, more stable world.

Now we need to bring all this together, to forge joined up strategies and maximise our impact on the ground. Particularly in the troubled parts of the world where our action matters the most.

Wherever I have travelled – from Gaza to Haiti to East Africa and Balkans – this has been the key conclusion.

EU external action will always involve different actors. It is right and proper that development policy operates differently from diplomacy, crisis management or humanitarian aid.

Andris Piebalgs, Stefan Fule and Kristilina Georgieva, together with other Commission colleagues, have clear, distinct roles and I pay tribute to the work they are doing –under Lisbon we have the opportunity to operate under one shared comprehensive political strategy.

### **An aspiration now becoming reality**

My vision for the EEAS is one which ensures that when we speak, our voice is heard. And when we engage, our actions make the difference. Our citizens know that in the face of big problems such as fragile states, pandemics, energy security, climate change and illegal migration, we are more effective together.

And that effectiveness requires us to mobilise all the means at our disposal – diplomacy, political engagement, development assistance, civil and military crisis management tools in support of conflict prevention, peace building, security and stability.

Important for the future of Europe, important for the future of the world.

I have seen myself what we are capable of when we work together. When I travelled to East Africa I saw what our naval operation, Atalanta, is doing so well off-shore. But I also saw the important capacity building and development work on-shore. And as those engaged in our military mission were quick to say – the solution to the problems at sea lies on the land.

And that is why, working with Andris Piebalgs, we are making sure our programmes work better together. And why I will be returning to meet again with the leaders of Kenya, Tanzania, Mauritius, Seychelles, South Africa, Mozambique the Regional organisations and AU, to discuss how we can support their African leadership to find political solutions on the ground and how we can support the people of Somalia to a better future.

I know what we can, and are doing – I also know what we can achieve for the future. I am ambitious – I confess, for I believe it is time to move forward and get the Service up and running quickly.

We have a good deal on the table: a draft Decision and a set of Declarations that form a coherent package. Mr President I am submitting them formally to the record of today's proceedings.

I will not dwell on each and every aspect, but let me highlight some specific points on how we have found proper safeguards in areas that I know are important to this House:

- First and foremost, the text makes clear that we are safeguarding the Community method in all areas where it exists today. The EEAS will co-operate closely with the Commission services as part of the EU system.

- Second, I know how important political accountability is for this House. I am confident that a good framework has been found through the political declaration on Political Accountability.

I am looking forward to the intensive dialogue and exchange of information with the European Parliament and will make sure that my collaborators also give high priority to this aspect of their work.

The many obligations inherent in the job as High Representative do not allow me to be present as often as I would like in your debates.

But I am happy that we will have a system for my replacement in such cases, involving in particular colleagues from the Commission and from time to time also a Member of the Foreign Affairs Council from the rotating Presidency or the Presidency trio.

- Third, financial accountability. I am satisfied that we have clear language and guarantees regarding sound financial management including appropriate solutions to issues such as discharge and sub-delegation of budgetary powers to Heads of Delegation.

As a sign of the importance I attach to this issue I envisage a senior management team that not only has a Chief Executive Officer in the Executive Secretary General but also a Chief Operating Officer in the senior DG for budget and administration.

- Fourth, we have agreed carefully balanced arrangements regarding development policy and instruments. I know there was some concern that we might lose sight of development policy in the new set-up. Believe me, the opposite is the case.

Development is central to EU external action. It has given give us a strong profile on the international stage, as the world's leading donor. So, our cooperation programmes are a key tool in our bilateral and regional relationships.

This remains the case in the new Lisbon context. But Development cannot be pursued on its own, separate from other strands of external relations.

That is why we are creating a strong common platform, allowing us to work together – Andris Piebalgs, Stefan Füle and myself - to ensure that general development objectives and poverty reduction in particular are mainstreamed in our cooperation programmes.

- Fifth, we also have a balanced agreement on staff issues, between the wish of Member States to have at least one-third of staff in the EEAS coming from national diplomatic services – so that we can draw on their expertise, language and historical ties – while at the same time ensuring at least 60% of permanent officials.

In the same way, I am clear we need to ensure a proper gender and geographical balance, and not lose sight of wider diversity issues.

I am personally committed to this. Diversity is strength. A service that represents the EU should reflect that diversity. The wealth of experience, insights and languages that Europe's best diplomats will bring into the Service, will be one of our distinctive features and competitive advantage.

- Sixth, you will have seen my Declaration on the EEAS' central administration. The idea is that we all have a shared understanding on how the Service will look like.

I agree with the amendments that you have proposed and I will support them in the Council.

It is important to try to get things right at the beginning while giving ourselves the chance to review how things work, in light of new priorities and developments.

Members of this house have asked a number of questions on the handling of Crisis management and peacebuilding. I can assure you that the CSDP structures will be part of the EEAS in the way that was agreed by the European Council in October 2009 and as foreseen in the EEAS Decision.

I will ensure that the relevant units from the Commission which deal with planning and programming of crisis response, conflict prevention and peace building, and the CSDP structures, work in close cooperation and synergy, both under my direct responsibility and authority within the appropriate structure. This is of course without prejudice to the specific nature, notably intergovernmental and communitarian, of the policies.

Effective coordination of the work of the various departments in the EEAS will be key. Under my direct authority and responsibility, full coordination between all the services of the EEAS, in particular between the CSDP structures and the other relevant services of the EEAS will be ensured, respecting the specific nature of these structures.

I will also ensure that the right coordination is established between the EU Special Representatives and the relevant Departments in the EEAS.

- Finally, this House has also always paid great attention to Human Rights issues. This is a priority I fully share and I promise that as High Representative I will give high priority to the promotion of Human Rights and good governance around the globe and make sure they are a silver thread running through everything we do.

There will be a human rights and democracy structure at headquarters level as well as focal points in all relevant Union delegations with the task of monitoring the human rights situation and promoting an effective realisation of EU human rights policy goals.

Honourable Members,

Europe needs the External Action Service to build a stronger foreign policy. We need an integrated platform to project European values and interests around the world. It is time to give ourselves the means to realise our ambitions. It is time to get the right people in place to start doing the necessary work.

I agree with the amendments that you have proposed and I will support them in the Council.

I thank you for co-operation and I am counting on your support.

The vote you are making is an historic step in the development of the European Union. And although it isn't the destination, it's a key staging post in realising our shared vision for the future.

Thank you