

Baroness Ashton,
High Representative of the EU
for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

18 December 2009
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Dear Baroness Ashton,

Subject: Lisbon Treaty Changes to Foreign Policy Structure for Promotion of Human Rights

Following your recent appointment as High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, I am writing to welcome you to your new role and to express Amnesty International's hope that you will use your new position to bring about important advances in the way the EU implements its human rights commitments in its relationships with third countries. We kindly request a meeting at your earliest convenience, to discuss the structural changes to the EU's foreign policy architecture which will come about as a result of the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, and the opportunities and risks that these present for the EU's capacity for human rights protection and promotion at a global level.

In particular, we have three concrete proposals that we would be keen to hear your views on:

- Amnesty International would strongly support the appointment of a senior representative on human rights in the Brussels secretariat of the new European External Action Service (EEAS). Since the GAERC Conclusions of 2006 made clear that human rights should be mainstreamed throughout foreign policy, there have been a number of efforts to try to ensure that this mainstreaming happens. However it is evident that human rights protection and promotion are not yet sufficiently understood as a core responsibility of all the EU's foreign affairs personnel to enable this mainstreaming to take place to a satisfactory extent. It is clear that a visible 'ambassador' for human rights in external relations, with enough political weight, is needed to reinforce this mainstreaming. We believe that your **representative on human rights chairing the Political and Security Committee**, or successor body, would send a firm signal on the necessity of a human rights based approach to decision making being adopted throughout all areas of the EU's relations with third countries. It would also provide a workable decision making structure under the Foreign Affairs Council that would enable this mainstreaming to finally become a reality;
- Secondly, in Amnesty International's monitoring of the implementation by EU embassies and delegations of the EU Guidelines on human rights, we have consistently identified the lack of awareness and understanding of, or perceived responsibility for, these Guidelines as key barriers to their effectiveness. The construction of 'EU delegations' representing the EAS in third countries, provides a key moment to address these problems. In addition to mandatory training for the new staff of the EAS on the EU's commitments to human rights protection and promotion in relations with third countries, we believe that **responsibility for the Guidelines should be explicit in the job description of a member of each delegation, member state embassy and ESDP mission, senior enough to oversee not only the political relations with that country, but also economic and development co-operation**. This is crucial since, given the indivisibility of the full spectrum of human rights – economic, social and cultural, as well as civil and political - divorcing any part of the delegation, embassy or ESDP mission, from responsibility for fulfilling the EU's human rights commitments would risk diminishing the impact of human rights related activity in whichever part of the organization did have this responsibility. In addition, each EU delegation should be held accountable for the implementation of the EU Guidelines on human rights, by a requirement to report back to the High Representative on a bi-annual basis;

- Finally, we are aware of the initiative which the Swedish and Spanish Presidencies are taking with regard to developing 'focal point embassies' to lead initiatives under the human rights guidelines in certain third countries. While we welcome the strong co-ordination role that the new EU delegations will play in all aspects of foreign policy, we would strongly support the new delegations **building on the good practice, and drawing on the relationships, that the more active embassies on human rights have developed.** We will continue to strongly support the principle of burden sharing to implement human rights commitments in order to make the most of the limited human resources available in the EU's missions and delegations.

I very much look forward to the opportunity to discuss these proposals with you in greater detail at your earliest convenience, and to hear your plans with regards to consultation more generally with civil society on the development of the EEAS. I would also be keen to discuss how we can develop future cooperation and exchange of information between the EEAS, civil society and other relevant bodies, such as the new Brussels Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Yours sincerely,



Natalia Alonso
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Amnesty International EU Office

CC: Jose Manuel Barroso, President, European Commission