

Speech by High Representative Catherine Ashton at the EU's Institute for Security Studies annual conference "**European Security – taking stock and moving forth**", Paris, 23 May

Good afternoon, and let me say what a great pleasure it is to be here today. When I look back on the history of the European Union, you can see how the development of the single market, the economic powerhouse of Europe despite the challenges in present times, enabled us to operate in the world more effectively - by operating together.

When I was Trade Commissioner, I was privileged to negotiate the agreement with South Korea, and I am very well aware that negotiating on behalf of half a billion people and a vast range of industries and services gave us a better deal. When the Lisbon Treaty was created, those designing it – in particular the part of the treaty that covers my role and the work of the External Action Service - were looking at how you can translate that economic block into a strength of the members of the European Community coming together in foreign policy.

When I took on the responsibility of the High Representative I said we should be judged by the effectiveness we had in our own neighbourhood. What we do and how we work with the people and countries around us is of fundamental importance: it demonstrates the value and power of Europe, but it's also at the heart of what I believe is very important which is our own security. You know foreign policy is also about providing security and stability for people at home. And ensuring there is security and stability in our neighbourhood helps our stability and security and it supports our economic prosperity. We trade, we work, we travel; they trade, they work, they travel.

I also said that we should be working hard with our strategic partners. By that I mean the United States of America as well as the countries with whom we have strong relationships, like Russia, China, Brazil, India and South Africa, Mexico, Japan - countries where we have developed strong relations, but where we could do more together, whether that is operating jointly in the field of development or whether its our collaboration in the work done in New York or Geneva or simply in tackling some the bigger challenges we face in the world today.

This also applies to the work with international organisations like the United Nations as the most obvious one. We have the strongest possible relationship and are the biggest financial and other supporter of the UN. We equally work with the African Union, the Arab League, with the ASEAN countries, with groupings that have come together, either to imitate the European Union in some ways, or to create their own version of it and are very open about taking elements of our model and converting them into their own. We work together to try and collaborate effectively to tackle some of the global problems and challenges.

I will give you one example of such collaboration which is perhaps most on my mind at the present time: our collaboration with the E3+3 on the subject of the Iranian nuclear programme. I lead negotiations on behalf of the Security Council, together with partners - Member States, but also Russia, China and the United States of America. We work together to try and support efforts to ensure that we can have confidence in the future of the Iranian nuclear programme. But there are many other examples of when such collaboration made a huge difference, like when we worked with regional organisations on how to support Libya beyond the crisis and now during the difficult times.

For me the key approach created in the post-Lisbon era is the Comprehensive Approach. It started when we began to look at what opportunities we have in a post-Lisbon Treaty world to make sure that Europe was better recognised - people talked about being 'players, not payers' – and being better able to coordinate our own activities. I described this once to Secretary Clinton when she said: "You know, navigating our way through different institutions of the European Union is quite difficult!". "Well, yes," I said, "but the challenge for us is that you don't *have* to. You should simply see Europe. What happens behind - whether it's at the Commission, the External Action Service, the Parliament or even the Member States - shouldn't matter, what you should see is the door marked 'Europe' and know that whichever way you go we will respond in a coordinated and joined up way".

What is most important, is our ability to work better together to solve some of the challenges we are facing. Those of you who work with military personnel will know that they are often the first who will talk about the need to do other things than a military campaign; not least because they know what it means when we talk about military action. But it's also because they know that on its own it can't achieve what needs to be done.

And the best example for me is the case of Somalia. Our operation Atalanta - many Member States, at various times between 12 and 16, operating either ships or helicopters of logistical support - has reduced piracy off the Horn of Africa in the last two years by 95%. But the military people I have visited on the ships, at the logistical headquarters, in discussions in Brussels, in capitals across Europe, all say the same thing to me: They say you can't just solve the problem at sea. The solution to this problem lies on the land. 15-year-old boys do not take to small boats with badly run motors because they really want to. They do it because they are offered \$10 000 as opposed to \$2 a day, or in some cases it's the only option and opportunity that they have.

We need to find alternatives. When we were working to support the development of Somalia we brought together all the different ways in which we were operating. We had nine development programmes there. We have humanitarian support going in. We have the opportunities to bring in the institutional framework that Somalia needs. Support for the new president, support for the women of Somalia, developing ways of

engaging women and men in the political process, support in everything from education to economic growth. We supported the AMISOM forces that go in and have dealt with the scourge of Al-Shabaab in each community. But unless you go in behind them and you provide water, education, economic activity- the sense of a community being able to look after itself – then that's not going to work.

Developing the Comprehensive Approach was for us very important and very significant. It's significant because it's the first time we sought to bring together the different instruments that we have in that way. It's about foreign policy, defence policy, security policy, development, humanitarian aid, education - all of the different parts actually working together, which is what really matters.

Those of you, who like me have spent time in government, will know that joined up approaches in government require time, energy, effort, and are not automatic. They need to be achieved. I think that is one of the benefits that we see with the Lisbon Treaty - we can achieve that and create the solutions.

You take that approach, take it out of Somalia and put in Sahel. When we started to work with the four Ministers - from Algeria, from Mauretania, from Niger, from Mali- two years ago in the context of our Sahel strategy, for many people outside it may have seemed a rather strange thing to be doing. But we knew that we needed to see a broader strategic approach to solving the problems – not just of the people in the north of these countries in the Sahel area, but generally for that region.

This is a region that suffers from every possible problem: they need food, they need to have education, they need basic services. And we now see in Mali the real sense of wanting to have a government reach out to the people, create the situation for elections as soon as possible and to put the elements of a state in place. We talk to the governments of these countries about putting in mobile health clinics as a symbol and a signal that represents in some way a country, a state, a government.

All those different things have to come together if there is going to be an approach that is going to work and going to last – we need to make sure that there is leadership, there is governance. If you look at what we have been doing in Libya, in Tunisia, in Egypt, what we will be doing in Syria, you see that it is also about building the concept of economics and politics working together.

Let me pick out another country, let me turn to Burma/Myanmar or Myanmar/Burma, whichever way you wish to call it, and look at the dramatic changes going on there. If you visit the country you will see - as I did when I went to the rural communities - the great need people have to develop economically as well as politically. We developed the concept of the task force which is how you bring together the business community, together with the support of the political process. We invite Members of the European Parliament, Ambassadors from the European Union, politicians from Europe, who themselves not so long ago went through dramatic transition and know the challenges that they faced and the problems they had to overcome.

Through the task forces, we put everyone together to try and support countries going through transition, not just for one day, but on a continuing basis. We did this in Jordan, in Egypt, in Tunisia. We are looking to support the leadership, President U Thein Sein and opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, to ensure that they will have a successful transition. We see Europe playing its part in developing that overall strategic approach.

It is also about what I call 'deep democracy'. When we talk about countries going through the change, the transition, we think about elections. While doing this we need to think about the next ten elections and we need to make sure they happen. We need to take account of the fact that when countries go through dramatic change it takes time, there is a lot of upheaval, but it's about building the platform that will enable them to have a solid and genuine democracy.

A Libyan woman said to me when I went to visit Benghazi during the initial fighting two years ago: "We want what you have. You take it for granted every single day because you have democracy as your way of life, you have institutions that are not corrupt, you have police who work for you, you have judiciary you can rely on, you have the guarantee that if you elect a government that disappoints you, you can throw them out four, five years later." Or the Egyptians who said: "What we really really want is a retired president, because we never had one, in 7000 years no president has ever retired in Egypt. We'd like to have one walking around somewhere." In fact I would like more than one all of the time.

I am talking about all these elements, these different aspects of how you build a democracy that is much deeper than simply an election: how you build political parties, how you build the political process, how you engage men and women in the political process so that they feel part of it, they feel that they can develop and how you develop civil society. In Tunisia, when I went to visit the human rights groups I was the first person from outside of Tunisia who ever set foot in their building and met human rights groups many of whom had never been allowed to meet each other.

Building and supporting civil society is part of that, it is critical for the potential of nations to make it through difficult transition. Europe is full of knowledge and experience about how to do that: many countries who themselves have been through difficult and turbulent times have something to offer in support of nations who must find their own way. Let's take economic growth and development – so that people get jobs, so they don't have to worry about supporting their families or being supported. People seeing that their rights are respected, people having what we have and what we take – if you like – for granted.

Let us also look at the security challenges that we face, the role that Europe can play in helping to solve problems. I have been privileged to be supporting the Prime Ministers of Serbia and Kosovo in the process of normalising the relations between the two sides. I was told that it couldn't be done, but it was. We facilitated the process and helped them to reach an agreement. In fact they were with me yesterday to start

moving forward on the implementation plan for this agreement. And we will continue our work together.

If they can do it, so can many other countries in similar situations. I believe the European Union is uniquely placed - especially in its own neighbourhood - to help people solve their problems. To incentivize them to do it – maybe because they want to be very close to us or part of the EU, or because they want to be good neighbours, or they want to see a strong relationship with Europe that can help them economically and politically.

I know many of you also think about the broader security challenges. When 10 years ago we talked about security, the challenges we faced were pretty straightforward. But the challenges now are broader and much more complicated. If you take the impact of climate change on security, there are probably at least hundred states that we can identify as being in danger from climate change: draught, famine, flood or simply being unable to offer the people the support through difficult times. You see it in countries where repeated draughts make communities disappear. People have to go and find somewhere else to live.

We saw it in the terrible floods in Pakistan where whole communities had to change because the nature of climate had changed, the nature of the pattern of flood had changed, which meant these communities simply couldn't be rebuilt exactly where they were. They had to think creatively about what to do; that can happen in so many countries where the uprooting of whole communities needs to be considered in order for them to stay together.

We also think about cyber security. This is an issue that is relevant in the military context, but also extremely relevant in the everyday life of people in Europe and beyond. Cyber security challenges businesses and industries overall and that has an impact on countries and on companies. Many companies operate not just in one country, but in many. And that is why we, with my colleagues in the Commission, developed a European Cyber Security Strategy.

But I go back to where I began, which is for me the strength of what we do together. Individual nations do many things as nation states. Individual members of the European Union do many things as nation states. They have good and strong relations with many parts of the world and this is what they should do. But when we come together, I believe, not just on economic issues, but on foreign policy issues, Europe is well placed as a block, as a group, to take on the challenges that we face today and to genuinely be able to contribute to their solution, often in partnership, sometimes on our own, but always because we believe this is the best way to offer our citizens a greater and better future.

Thank you very much.