



EUROPEAN UNION

**Brussels, 24 May 2012
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STATEMENT BY CATHERINE ASHTON, HIGH REPRESENTATIVE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY POLICY AND VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE COMMISSION, FOLLOWING THE TALKS OF E3+3 WITH IRAN IN BAGHDAD ON 24th MAY 2012

First of all, I would like to thank the Iraqi government, and in particular Foreign Minister Zebari, for the excellent hospitality and organisation of these talks.

The E3+3 remain firm, clear and united in seeking a swift diplomatic resolution of the international community's concerns on the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme, based on the NPT, and the full implementation of UN Security Council and IAEA Board of Governors Resolutions. We expect Iran to take concrete and practical steps to urgently meet the concerns of the international community, to build confidence and to meet its international obligations.

We have met with our Iranian counterparts over the last two days in very intense and detailed discussions.

In line with our agreement in Istanbul, the E3+3 laid out clear proposals to address the Iranian nuclear issue and, in particular, all aspects of 20% enrichment.

We also put ideas on the table on reciprocal steps we would be prepared to take.

Iran declared its readiness to address the issue of 20% enrichment and came with its own five-point plan, including their assertion that we recognise their right to enrichment.

Having held in-depth discussions with our Iranian counterparts over two days - both in full plenary sessions and bilaterals - it is clear that we both want to make progress, and that there is some common ground. However, significant differences remain. Nonetheless, we do agree on the need for further discussion to expand that common ground.

P R E S S

FOR FURTHER DETAILS:

Michael Mann +32 498 999 780 - +32 2 299 97 80 - Michael.Mann@eeas.europa.eu

Maja Kocijancic +32 498 984 425 - +32 2 298 65 70 - Maja.Kocijancic@ec.europa.eu

Sebastien Brabant +32 460 75 09 98 - Sebastien.Brabant@ec.europa.eu

COMM-SPP-HRVP-ASHTON@ec.europa.eu

www.eeas.europa.eu

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We will go back to our respective capitals and consult. We will maintain intensive contacts with our Iranian counterparts to prepare a further meeting in Moscow with arrival on 17th June, with talks on 18th and 19th June.

As we have already agreed, the talks will be based on a step-by-step approach and reciprocity.

We remain determined to resolve this problem in the near term through negotiations, and will continue to make every effort to that end.

The statement will be available shortly at: <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/ebs/schedule.cfm>.
