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**Javier SOLANA,
EU High Representative for the CFSP**

**Summary of his introductory remarks
at a press conference in Tehran, Iran**

12 January, 2004

"I am extremely pleased to be here in Tehran today. It is my fourth visit to Tehran in the last two years and I am in regular contact with the Iranian authorities. This shows the importance the European Union attaches to its relations with Iran. We are natural partners. We have common interests and concerns. Iran is a key country in this region. The EU Council of Ministers has mandated me to take forward the EU's dialogue with Iran in all areas. My main aim is, therefore, to further advance in our dialogue and to strengthen our relations in a particularly important moment (reform process and elections scheduled for next month).

This visit takes place also after the Bam earthquake. European citizens and leaders have been shocked by this tragedy. European governments and NGOs, as well as the EU's humanitarian agency, ECHO, have rushed to provide assistance in the rescue operations. We now have to face the heavy reconstruction tasks. The European Union will continue to show its solidarity to the Iranian people. Tomorrow, I will travel to Bam in order to directly transmit this message of solidarity and to contribute to finding how best to assist in these very difficult moments.

Parliamentary elections in Iran on the 20th of February constitute an important event which the EU and the international Community will follow with great interest. The Parliament is the expression of the will of the people in all democratic countries. Free and fair elections and election process are therefore a necessary condition for any democracy. I look forward to meeting with representatives of the Parliament later today, including Speaker Karroubi, as well as the Head of the Foreign Policy Committee, Mirdamadi.

I have just had a very constructive meeting with Minister Kharrazi. We have examined some of the main issues of our common agenda: EU-Iran relations, the situation in the region (Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the Middle East Peace Process), and non-proliferation.



Regarding this last issue important developments have taken place in the last months. The Iranian authorities have undertaken new commitments, which the international community welcomes. I trust that Iran will continue to follow this approach in a consistent manner and to co-operate with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Iran and the EU have an opportunity to build on this. There are, nevertheless, certain issues that need further clarification.

We have identified other areas in which we need to continue working together. I plan on meeting other important Iranian leaders during my trip in order to further discuss these issues, in particular President Khatami and the Secretary of the National Security Council, Rohani.

I am now at your disposal for any questions you may wish to ask."

FOR FURTHER DETAILS:

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