

Brussels, 26 April 2012

Dear Ministers, dear Colleagues,

Egypt is at a turning point. With Sunday's election of President Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, former member of the Bureau of the Muslim Brotherhood, it has taken a further step in setting up new, accountable, and democratic institutions. At the same time, the economic and social situation in Egypt has further deteriorated and threatens the stability of the country. The population is increasingly disaffected and suspicious of a political leadership that has not yet addressed their basic needs. This could strengthen the position of extremists and radical Islamic groups, thereby plunging the country into a dangerous spiral.

We, as the European Union, have repeatedly stated that we are ready to assist Egypt consolidate and achieve its reforms while addressing the urgent needs of its population.

Our response must be comprehensive. It should be based on the three M's - Money, Mobility, and Market.

This engagement does not come at zero cost.

We are living through a dire economic period. Our budget is zero-growth; if we want to address the enormous challenges facing Egypt, we must prioritise our resources. The Commission has prepared a EUR 800 million aid package for 2012-2013, whose financing requires a transfer of funds from our Latin American development programme of EUR 450 million.

Furthermore, the opening of our internal market to Egyptian products will, of course, have an impact on our agriculture. However, this is a price worth paying if we want to promote a self-sustaining economy in Egypt.

Finally, the introduction of mobility schemes for Egyptian workers through specific visa-liberalisation measures might raise concerns in some of our countries. Nonetheless, it is a necessary step in order to provide, in the short term, additional employment opportunities to a rapidly growing population.

The above measures are urgent. For this reason, I have decided to convene an extraordinary meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council on 17 May 2012, in the Salone dei Duecento, at the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence.

Please find herewith attached the agenda. I look forward to meeting you in Florence.

Baroness Catherine Ashton of Upholland  
EU High Representative/Vice President of the Commission

**Agenda**  
**Foreign Affairs Council**  
**17 May 2012**  
**Salone dei Duecento**  
**Palazzo Vecchio**  
**Florence**

**Cons/2012-123**

1. Adoption of the draft agenda
2. Introduction by the High representative
3. Presentation of the extraordinary aid package for Egypt (2012-2013) by the Commissioner for enlargement and neighbourhood policy, Stefan Füle

*Coffee break and bilateral consultations (mid-morning)*

4. Formal round of interventions by national delegations
5. Debate

*Buffet lunch and bilateral consultations 13.30-14.30*

6. Continuation of the debate
7. Summing up by the HRVP and first round of discussion on the draft conclusions

*Coffee break and bilateral consultations (mid-afternoon)*

8. Adoption of the conclusions