



**CIVIL SOCIETY OPEN LETTER TO EUROPEAN COUNCIL PRESIDENT,
EUROPEAN COMMISSIONERS AND EU27 FOREIGN MINISTERS: 22 MARCH 2010**

Dear Council President,
Dear Commission President and Commissioners,
Dear Foreign Ministers,

Our ten organisations share a long-standing conviction that Europe needs stronger and more coherent external action in order to deliver on its strategic objectives in the rest of the world. The EU External Action Service created by the Lisbon Treaty is a once in a lifetime opportunity to respond to this challenge, creating a strategy and a service fit for 21st-century security.

As practitioners from the environmental, security, peace-building, development and human rights communities, we are appalled by the current debate among the Brussels institutions on implementing the EAS. This will not deliver the EU's key external action objectives, which are clearly set out in the Treaty as: promoting "democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law".

The Treaty has created the High Representative assisted by the EAS to "conduct [and] ensure the consistency of [and] be responsible for" external action. Brussels turf wars over this terminology threaten to make the EAS unfit for purpose in 3 ways:

- **Strategic policy coherence:** the High Representative's authority to ensure consistency across all EU external action is crucial. How can Europe have a coherent policy toward an increasingly assertive China if trade, human rights and climate policies are dealt with in separate silos? Coherence also requires the EAS to have adequate oversight of strategic and multiannual country programming commitments led by other departments, such as Overseas Development Aid.
- **Staff expertise:** delivery of EU objectives will require political analysis and skills from beyond the traditional diplomatic toolkit. The EAS must be able to recruit among Member State and Commission staff from all areas of government, not just diplomatic streams – e.g. from economics, development, security and energy ministries. The staffing rules must also be flexible enough to accommodate world class expertise, detailed political knowledge and language skills from outside public administration. It is vital that the staffing rules do not limit the High Representative's access to talent.
- **Mandates to address critical priorities:** the current implementing decisions should include a short-list of priority areas for enhanced coordination this year, including: China, climate change and energy security, conflict prevention, Africa, and Neighbourhood Policy.

We call on Brussels and the Member States to re-focus on creating a strong, stand-alone EAS, not dominated by any of the current institutions. The European Commission needs to support Catherine Ashton's proposal for country desks which can coordinate across policy areas. The European Parliament should worry less about budgetary micro-management over appointments, and instead lead a broad and bold consultation on the objectives of EU external action.

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