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**Remarks to the press by High Representative Catherine Ashton
following the meeting of the support and follow-up group on the
situation in Mali, Brussels, 5th February 2013**

Ladies and gentlemen.

It has been a great honour to host this important meeting today in Brussels.

It demonstrates the EU's commitment to helping resolve the crisis in Mali and supporting the people of that country in their hour of need.

I'd like to pay tribute to the work of the African Union, the UN and ECOWAS, who have co-chaired the meeting today. Our role was as host.

We have covered a huge number of issues and you will see that in the conclusions shortly.

We have discussed and listened carefully to the issues and have learned two important things.

Firstly, that every democracy has to be able to defend itself. We strongly condemn the atrocities that have been committed against the people of northern Mali, the destruction of their cultural heritage and human rights abuses.

Secondly, the international community has recognised its responsibilities and reacted quickly to protect the Malian people.

P R E S S

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France has been in the frontline; the European Union and its member states, along with ECOWAS, the African Union and their members, are working together to provide support across the board. From the EU, we are already delivering on the pledges made at the Foreign Ministers' meetings on 17 and 31 of January.

To train the Malian Army, help fund AFISMA and resume development support. Our total pledge of support is more than €300m in the year ahead.

All of us are committed to supporting and accompanying the people of Mali on their path back to freedom and development. In that context, we welcome the adoption of the Roadmap.

We will continue to support this process until not just Mali but the whole of the Sahel and North African region becomes stable again.

My part, as I said, was to host.

The most important work that has been done has been by the people with me today
And I commend them for it, pay tribute to them and now hand the floor to them.

EU hosts a ministerial meeting of the Support and Follow-Up Group on the situation in Mali
