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from: General Secretariat of the Council
to: Delegations

Subject: **Plenary session of the European Parliament
Situation in Egypt**
Statement on behalf of the HR for foreign affairs and security policy
Strasbourg, 3 July 2013

M. Leskevicius, on behalf of the High Representative for foreign affairs and security policy, delivered the speech in Annex.

On behalf of political groups,

M. Salafranca, EPP, ES stated that Egypt was going through a serious economic and social crisis, as well as a political one, and that the message the European Parliament should deliver was a call for political dialogue and peaceful settlement of the political crisis. He said that what was needed was a clear roadmap for a government and constitutional reform and for a new election law which would allow for elections to take place soon.

Ms De Keyser, S&D, BE considered it important to reiterate the EU's support to the Egyptian people. She said that Morsi had been democratically elected, but had not delivered on what the Egyptian people had mandated him for.

She considered that he had failed to lift the country out of the deep economic and financial crisis and that he had failed to guarantee the full respect of fundamental rights within the new constitution. She said that a coalition government was needed and that elections should be envisaged. She called on the High Representative to take action, to use her powers and play her role to the full.

Ms Schaake, ALDE, NL expressed concern at the tense situation and the risk of civil war, which should be prevented. She considered that Morsi, although he had been democratically elected, had lost his legitimacy in the eyes of Egyptians as a consequence of his political and economic choices. She said that democracy was more than one man, one voice. She stated that what was needed was a process leading to a new constitution and a political and economic process guaranteeing the respect of fundamental rights and liberties. She called for the EU to offer perspectives to the Egyptian people.

Ms Sargentini, Greens/EFA, NL, stated that Morsi had not delivered on democratic reform. She called for the EU to press for elections and to offer financial aid, though the latter should be delivered at the right moment. She expressed concern at the risk of radicalization and the hope that all the parts of the Egyptian civil society could be heard in the process under way towards a new leadership and democratic reform.

M. Tannock, ECR, UK also considered that the EU ought to offer active support to the Egyptian people in search of a democratic model. He agreed that Morsi's legitimacy had been largely eroded by his political action and choices and should therefore step down from power.

M. Meyer, GUE/NGL, ES noted that over 20 million Egyptians had signed a petition requesting a change of political direction, and that the Egyptians were aspiring to universal rights. He called for a new constitution in Egypt.

M. Belder, EFD, NL expressed concerns at the risks for Egypt's stability and considered that the army was the last resort to avoid a dictatorship by fundamentalists in this country.

M. Obermayr, NI, AT criticized the conditions for delivery of financial aid by the EU to Morsi's government and the promises by the President of the European Council for the transfer of five billion euros of aid. He recommended the EU to be cautious and exert appropriate control on any financial aid to be granted by the EU, which should be made conditional on the fulfillment of democratic reform.

M. Leskevicius on behalf of the High Representative for foreign affairs and security policy, stated that the EU ought to base its position on its clear principles and values and was not to take sides with one or another group. He said that the views and analysis of the situation coincided and that the EU would remain engaged with Egypt as a neighbour and partner and would insist on the pursuit of a peaceful transition. He added that the Egyptians would be those to ultimately determine the future and the path of Egypt and that Egyptian leaders and political representatives had to listen to the voice of Egypt and to enter into an open-minded and broad dialogue with all sides and ensure that the demands and aspirations of the Egyptian citizens were addressed through dialogue and compromise, the biggest enemy of Egypt being division and polarization.

Statement by M. Leskevicius on behalf of the High Representative

(check against delivery)

Mr President, Honourable Members,

- At this very moment Egypt is going through dramatic events. All the efforts should be focussed at ensuring that the transition to Democracy remains a peaceful process, based on consensus and joint ownership by all political forces. This is about listening to the voices of the people and making compromises. The moment is critical and the EU must send an unequivocal message in support of the democratic transition, only a political process will solve the present crisis. This not about artificial deadlines or ultimatums. The region and the world cannot afford failure.
- The High Representative/ Vice President Ashton has urged this very morning all sides to show restraint and asked all parties to find a political solution based on substantial and inclusive dialogue. As the HRVP has stressed since the beginning of the Arab Spring, Deep Democracy is not only about elections and majorities. It is much more: an independent judiciary, an active civil society, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression. Democracy is ultimately about listening to the citizens and making compromises, ensuring that the voices of all people – and not simply the majority – are heard.
- We see with deep concern that the demonstrations are turning more and more violent with losses of lives and many injured to deplore. The large numbers of sexual abuse of female protesters are deeply troubling. Our thoughts are with the families of these victims.
- The HRVP was in Egypt last week and discussed the situation with the President as well as with the opposition with this clear message.
- We have argued since the beginning that the revolution belongs to the Egyptian people and that political forces must ensure that the demands and aspirations of the Egyptian citizens must be addressed through dialogue and compromise.
- We will continue to engage at all levels to say loud and clear that the voices of the Egyptian people must be heard. The biggest challenge and, indeed, the biggest risk for Egypt is the polarization of its society and political system.

- As we have all witnessed, millions of protesters took to the streets in Egypt demanding President Morsi to quit and calling for early elections; tens of thousands of Islamists maintained their sit-in, with smaller protests in some provincial centres. Only one year ago Mohamed Morsi from the Muslim Brotherhood was appointed Egypt's first democratically elected President. A milestone in Egypt's democratic transition that the EU and the international community welcomed. President Morsi immediately pronounced himself 'the representative of *all* Egyptians' and he smoothly organised a civilian hand-over of power from the military.
- Since then, the EU has invested time and efforts to support the democratic evolution of the country – engaging at all levels with government and opposition. EUSR Bernardino Leon spent months of shuttle-diplomacy to Cairo to meet with the government, Presidency and the whole political opposition in order to build confidence and to find common ground on political and economic issues.
- All interlocutors agreed that Egypt was facing economic and political challenges and they all wanted to do something about it. They also agreed that they have to talk to each other but they simply did not seem able to do it. And unfortunately the much expected government reshuffle in early May did not yield the results wished for, quite the contrary.
- At the same time, the EU has also been very active in support of respect for human rights in Egypt. The recent Court ruling sentencing 43 employees of foreign NGOs to prison is very worrying and Cathy Ashton and Commissioner Füle stressed the crucial role of civil society in Egypt's on-going transition.
- The EUSR for Human Rights Stavros Lambrinidis has travelled to Cairo in February and now in mid-June emphasising the importance of building a society based on the rule of law and in respect of human rights. The EU has offered technical support to the draft NGO legislation and the law against violence on women.

- Tangible results of the EUSR's efforts have been the acceptance from the Egyptian side to work closely with the Venice Commission on the draft NGO law. Several of its recommendations have been acknowledged and Egypt has confirmed its willingness to continue to work closely with the EU and the international community in order to address the remaining problematic provisions of the draft law. Finally, concerning the court convictions of 43 NGOs and individuals, Egypt has confirmed that the Egyptian authorities are awaiting the politically appropriate time in order to find a solution.
- Apart from the political stalemate, mistrust and in many areas worrying human rights situation, what possibly has triggered such mass protests is the fact that more than two years on, Egyptians are feeling worse off than they were before 2011.
- Unfortunately, the finalisation of an IMF arrangement to which fundamental reforms are linked is continuously postponed; public services are going downhill, including daily power cuts and fuel shortages.
- The EU stands ready to assist the Egyptian people in their efforts to complete their challenging democratic transition' – this has been and continues to be the EU's commitment to Egypt. But Egypt needs to help the EU to help Egypt. There is an intrinsic link between political agreement and stability and the economic situation and return of tourists and Foreign Direct Investment which Egypt is in dire need of. In order to materialise our large-scale financial commitments, the EU, as well as other international donors, need political stability and true commitment to democratic and economic reforms.