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HIGH REPRESENTATIVE  
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MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
TRADE

Brussels, **19 MAY 2016**  
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To the signatories of the open letter of 15 March

Dear Members of Civil Society Organisations,

We fully share your dismay regarding the heinous murder of Human Rights Defender Berta Cáceres and the initially very worrisome situation of Mexican citizen Gustavo Castro Soto. As you mention, the EU and EU Member States in Honduras immediately reacted to condemn the murder of Ms Cáceres by issuing a strong statement. The EU Ambassador also attended Ms Cáceres' wake as a gesture of solidarity with the family. In subsequent statements we underlined the need for a thorough, transparent and expedite investigation of the case – as well as of the later assassination of Mr Nelson García, a member of Berta Cáceres' organisation COPINH – and for the full protection of Mr Castro.

We would like to reassure you that these incidents are of great concern to us and will be further discussed with the national authorities through our channels of political dialogue and cooperation. In particular, the EU will continue to follow the investigation of Berta Cáceres' killing very closely and support proposals of an international independent investigation.

In addition, the EU will continue to urge for the effective protection of Human Rights Defenders in line with the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders and the national law on protection of human rights defenders. The drafting of this law benefited from EU support through our human-rights cooperation programme "PADH". The EU Delegation in Honduras has also an informal group called "Grupo Enlace" where human rights issues are discussed and followed-up on with the authorities. Berta Cáceres was the first human rights defender to meet this group and afterwards EU ambassadors visited her and COPINH in Intibucá.

Regarding the Agua Zarca dam project, we would like to share with you the information that the European investors involved have decided to put the project under scrutiny and suspend its related activities and disbursements. On our side, we will continue to work closely with national stakeholders and the ILO to promote the implementation of ILO Convention 169.

Finally, we wish to inform you that the recommendations you sent us are already part of the commitments by the EU and EU Member States in the framework of the new Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy adopted in July 2015. In this document, the EU Member States committed to strive to include any new or revised Bilateral Investment Treaty that they negotiate in

the future with third countries provisions related to the respect and fulfilment of human rights, including provisions on Corporate Social Responsibility, in line with those inserted in agreements negotiated at EU level. On the latter, the EU expects parties to the EU-Central America Association Agreement, including Honduras, to fully implement its provisions, including those concerning human and labour rights, environmental protection and corporate social responsibility.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'F. Mogherini', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Federica Mogherini

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Cecilia Malmström', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cecilia Malmström