

Catherine Ashton appointed as new EU Trade Commissioner - Brussels, 6 October 2008

Catherine Ashton has today been confirmed as the new European Commissioner for External Trade. The appointment by the Council of Ministers follows the departure of Peter Mandelson to take up the position of Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform in the United Kingdom. Commissioner Ashton assumes the duties of Trade Commissioner as of today. She will soon appear in front of the trade committee of the European Parliament.

Speaking following her appointment, Commissioner Ashton said: "I am delighted and very proud to have been asked to serve as Commissioner, to be a part of the European response to the global challenges we face. I look forward to setting out my views to EU member states and the European Parliament very soon."

Catherine Ashton was nominated by UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown, in agreement with Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso, on Friday.

Background

Catherine Margaret Ashton, Baroness Ashton of Upholland, PC, was until now a Labour member in the UK House of Lords, the Leader of the House of Lords and Lord President of the Council in Gordon Brown's first cabinet in June 2007. She is an economist and previously held positions as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Department for Education and Skills, Parliamentary Under-Secretary in the Department for Constitutional Affairs, and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry of Justice. She brings with her significant European experience, including steering the Lisbon Treaty through the UK's upper chamber and dealing with EU justice and home affairs issues in her previous positions.