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To the Members of the European Parliament who signed the letter of 26 March 2014

*Dear Members,*

Thank you for your letter of 26 March 2014 concerning the human rights situation in the Indonesian provinces of Papua and West Papua.

Overall Indonesia is a human rights success story. Decentralisation, successful policing and specific peace initiatives have helped reduce problems dramatically over the last 15 years. Indonesia is one of the freest and most democratic countries in South East Asia with a powerful and active Parliament and a dynamic civil society. Indonesia's transition from dictatorship to democracy is hailed as a model for the region and even for the Arab world. This progress was witnessed by EU Special Representative for Human Rights, Stavros Lambrinidis, during his visit to Indonesia in May 2013.

There is much that Indonesia and the EU share, starting with a strong commitment to democratic values enshrined in the Partnership Cooperation Agreement (PCA).

Turning to the case of Papua, there remains, as your letter clearly indicates, a lot to be done. The EU has raised consistently its specific human rights concerns (freedom of expression, treatment of prisoners and accountability for human rights violations) through the annual Human Rights Dialogue – four of which have been held to date. The Dialogue is an opportunity to raise respective questions of each other and the EU has repeatedly done so for Papua.

Reports on human rights violations, such as crack downs on demonstrations, as well as attacks on Indonesian law enforcement officers by armed groups are often difficult, if not impossible, to verify in Papua and West Papua. In this regard, the EU has encouraged Indonesia to allow for greater access for journalists and civil society organizations, so as to avoid any misunderstandings.

The EU welcomes the promise made by central Government to conduct inquiries into alleged abuses by security forces, and supports the discussions between Jakarta and church leaders, the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) and government representatives. Both represent encouraging signs of a constructive course of action.

As regards your specific point about arms exports, EU Member States have to assess and take into account respect for human rights, including international humanitarian law, in the country of final destination as well as the risk that the military technology or equipment will be diverted within the buyer country. As you know, the decision whether to export arms or not and the evaluation of such risk against the agreed criteria remains the responsibility of the Member States.

The EU supports the Indonesian central Government's efforts to boost development in Papua and West Papua through its projects in sectors such as health, education and climate change in order to reach the same level of peace, stability and prosperity as other parts of the country.

Finally, the EU assesses the genuine attempt of the Indonesian Government to deliver concrete economic wellbeing to the population in Papua in spite of political difficulties and hopes that these efforts will be fruitful.

*Yours sincerely,*

*Catherine Ashton*

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