Ms Emma Bonino  
Vice-President of the Italian Senate  
& Founder of No Peace Without Justice

Ms Mariam Lamizana  
President of the Inter-African Committee  
on Traditional Practices Affecting  
the Health of Women and Children (IAC)

Ms Khady Koita  
President of La Palabre

Dear Ms Bonino,  
Dear Ms Lamizana,  
Dear Ms Koita,

Thank you for your letter of 13 June 2012 and the information on the initiative under the patronage of H.E. Ms Chantal Compaore, First Lady of Burkina Faso, for a worldwide ban on female genital mutilation. I am aware that you have also sent this letter to the attention of President Barroso and Commissioner Dalli and would like to take this opportunity to reply to you on their behalf, too.

Female genital mutilation (FGM), is one of the most prevalent and pervasive forms of human rights violations. It is a degrading treatment. It violates fundamental rights, it violates the right to health and it violates children’s rights. There are estimates that some 3 million women and girls in the world face FGM every year.

I am deeply committed to strengthening EU foreign actions in this area. In the recently adopted EU Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy a clear commitment was expressed in support to relevant initiatives against harmful traditional practices, in particular female genital mutilation.

In this regard I wanted to express my support to the Appeal for a worldwide ban on female genital mutilation by the United Nation General Assembly in 2012.

Please accept the assurance of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Ashton