



Catherine Ashton

High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy



1956 - Born in Lancashire, the UK.

1977 - Graduated from University London (Sociology BSc)

1999 - Appointed as a life Peer by the Labour Government.

2007 - Leader of the House of Lords (where she played a key role in passing the EU's Lisbon Treaty through the House).

2008 - Appointed EU Commissioner for Trade, taking over from Peter Mandelson, who resigned to take up a senior job in the UK Government.

2009 - Appointed *High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy* (foreign policy position created by the EU's Lisbon Treaty [2007]).

All 27 EU Member States unanimously agreed Ashton's appointment. Ashton was also selected as a vice-president of the Commission.

2010 - Ashton faced an intensive interview in the EU Parliament.

MEPs cross-examined Ashton on her policy of 'quiet diplomacy'.

Role in the EU:

- Provide the EU with a single and cohesive voice on security issues.
- Co-ordinate EU foreign policy and build consensus between member states.
- Considered to be one of the most powerful positions within the EU.
- Specific powers of the Foreign Affairs post are largely undefined and likely to be shaped by Catherine Ashton in the coming years.
- Decisions on the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy are still made by EU states in the European Council.

Quotes:

'When I talk about quiet diplomacy, this does not necessarily mean that I myself am very quiet, my interest is in outcomes. Sometimes loudness doesn't work.' (Ashton, January 2010).

Trivia:

Before her appointment as EU High Representative, Catherine Ashton was relatively unknown in European politics, so her appointment to the chief EU foreign policy position gained mixed responses. She was criticised for having limited foreign policy experience and for having never held an elected position (even in UK politics). Ashton admitted that her appointment had come as a surprise, but she told critics that she is *'the best person for the job'*.

Website: http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/ashton/index_en.htm