




BRIEFING NOTE: Catherine ASHTON

Name	Baroness Catherine ASHTON 
First time Commissioner?	Second time Commissioner, previously Commissioner for Trade (replaced Peter Mandelson during last Commission)
Date of Hearing	Monday 11 January 13.00-16.00
Country	United Kingdom
Political Party	The Labour Party (S&D)
Previous UK Commissioner	Catherine Ashton/Peter Mandelson
Portfolio	High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission
Services	DG External Relations (RELEX)
Personal details	Born March 20, 1956 in Upholland, Lancashire, United Kingdom Married Two children, three stepchildren
Current duties	Since 1st December 2009, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy 1st December 2009, Vice President designate, European Commission
Political career	(October 2008) Member of European Commission (June 2007) Leader of the House of Lords and Lord President of the Council (May 2006) Privy Councillor (2001-2006) Minister in the Department for Education and Skills, the Department for Constitutional Affairs and subsequently Ministry of Justice. Responsibilities included human rights, freedom of information and equalities.

	(1999) Made a life peer in the House of Lords at the request of Tony Blair
Professional career	(1998-2001) Chair of the Hertfordshire Health Authority and Vice President of the National Council for One Parent Families (1983-1989) Director of Business in the Community
Education	Bedford College, London University
Languages	English: mother tongue French: intermediate
FYI....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Took over the position as Commissioner for Trade from Lord Mandelson in October 2008, when he returned to the UK to take up the position of Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills. She was considered to be a relative novice in the field of trade prior to taking on the portfolio. However, she impressed MEPs in her address to Parliament ahead of their vote to approve her. ▪ She has been actively engaged in a number of major EU trade initiatives – including the EU-South Korea Free Trade Agreement, and the Economic Partnership Agreements with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. She has also used the past twelve months to drive the process of the EU-Canada Free trade agreement forward. ▪ Ashton’s husband, pollster and political commentator Peter Gellner was targeted by the KGB as a source in the 1980s as intelligence documents from the 1960s showed that the British police as well as the KGB had incorrectly fingered him as a communist sympathiser. ▪ Was recently forced to deny taking funds from the Soviet Union during her days as treasurer for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament at the height of the Cold War. ▪ Voted House Magazine Minister of the Year and Channel 4 Peer of the Year in 2005. ▪ Voted Stonewall politician of the year in 2006.

For more information on the Commission hearings and the other nominees, please contact:

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