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**Javier SOLANA,
EU High Representative for the CFSP,
pays tribute to Nick Witney,
outgoing Chief Executive of the European Defence Agency
(Evora, Portugal, 29 September 2007)**

Javier Solana, Head of the European Defence Agency (EDA), today paid tribute to the outstanding achievements of outgoing EDA Chief Executive Nick Witney, who was the driving force of the agency during the first three years of its existence.

Speaking at an informal meeting of EU Defence Ministers in Evora, Portugal, Javier Solana said it was hard to think of any other new body which had made such a big impact in such a short time.

Among the Agency's achievements there has been the introduction of a Code of Conduct to promote transparency and cross-border competition in defence procurement; the Long-Term Vision report describing the trends that could shape ESDP operations and the military capabilities required in the future; a strategy to strengthen Europe's Defence Technological and Industrial Base; and the innovative Joint Investment Programme to encourage more collaborative spending on defence Research & Technology.

"As head of the Agency Establishment Team in 2004, Nick Witney took the wish of EU leaders to build up Europe's defence capabilities, laid out a vision for what was required and then, as the EDA's first chief executive, turned that vision into reality", Javier Solana said.

"Nick Witney painted a bold and clear picture showing why we needed to change. He used his intellect and creativity to come up with specific and practical proposals and argued tirelessly and persuasively for Member States to put them into effect", added the High Representative.

Nick Witney will be succeeded as Chief Executive on October 1 by Alexander Weis. *"As Germany's Deputy National Armaments Director, Alexander Weis has been an active supporter of the Agency's agenda and is ideally placed to build on Nick Witney's achievements. I wish them both the very best for the future",* Mr Solana said.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS:

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