

With Russia, EU Sees Talk but Little Action

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BRUSSELS — Although the European Union holds more meetings with Russia than with any other foreign partner, the actual results have remained "well behind expectations," EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton said Friday.

Ashton stressed, however, that relations with Russia "matter enormously" to the EU.

"We are tied together in terms of trade, investment, energy, human links and much more," she said in her first report to EU leaders.

Separate reports addressed EU relations with the United States and China.

Ashton warned that Europe is no longer the United States' main strategic focus and needs to show unity to avoid losing further influence with Washington.

"We can best exert our influence by ensuring a unified, capable and self-confident Europe," Ashton said. "When we are an efficient and reliable partner, the U.S. takes us seriously."

Earlier this year, President Barack Obama canceled a meeting with top EU officials. He finally held brief talks with them last month on the sidelines of a NATO summit in Lisbon, Portugal.

The report described EU ties with China as "pivotal for our security, stability and economic growth."

It said despite tensions with China caused by differences over human rights and issues such as Sudan or Myanmar, in "the long term it is difficult to imagine a well-functioning global order that protects our interests without a stronger EU-China relationship."

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