

Spain to define future of EU presidencies

Spain's six-month rotating presidency of the EU will be the first under the rules of the Lisbon Treaty, setting a precedent for the bloc's new leaders, Herman Van Rompuy, the first permanent President, and Catherine Ashton, the new High Representative for foreign affairs



Herman Van Rompuy (*above*), Catherine Ashton (*below*)

■ **February:** Ashton plans to visit Jerusalem to reinvigorate Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. Scathing remarks about "Israeli occupation" in her maiden speech angered Israelis. Ashton indicated EU and U.S. should take over lead of so-called **Middle East Quartet** and dump **Tony Blair** as its Special Envoy

■ **February:** Van Rompuy to chair extraordinary summit on economic situation in Europe

■ **March:** Van Rompuy and EU leaders meet in Valencia to discuss "**EU 2020**" strategy to promote bloc's financial recovery towards "**green, knowledge-based economy**". Ashton to chair meeting of Foreign Ministers in Cordoba

■ **April:** Establishment of new **European External Action Service** to boost EU's international influence. EEAS – headed by Ashton – will combine 130 existing delegations with estimated staff of 7,000 by 2012

■ **May:** Spain to chair **EU-Latin America** summit in Madrid in bid to secure Free Trade Agreements

■ **June:** EU summit to approve 2020 strategy. So-called "group of wise men", headed by Spain's former Prime Minister **Felipe Gonzalez**, to publish report outlining vision for Europe between 2020 and 2030

Other business: So-called "citizens initiative", women's rights, EU expansion, integration of 18 "phantom" MEPs elected in June 2009