

P R E S S R E L E A S E

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**DECLARATION BY THE PRESIDENCY
ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION CONCERNING NIGERIA**

The fresh arrests carried out by the Nigerian authorities in recent days, in particular those of General Olusegun Obasanjo, the former Head of State, and General Yar Adua, the former Vice-President of the Federation, cause the European Union serious concern.

These arrests of prominent figures demonstrate the impasse into which the military authorities in Nigeria have got themselves. They confirm the European Union's belief that the re-establishment of a constitutional regime and public liberties is essential for civil peace in Nigeria. The European Union in particular calls upon the Nigerian authorities to release the political prisoners, to restore freedom of expression and the independence of the judiciary and to guarantee the safety of all persons who remain imprisoned. The imprisonment for nine months now of Mr Abiola prompts continuing disquiet.

The European Union is convinced that the stability and prosperity of a major country like Nigeria cannot come about through increased repression, nor the prolongation of military rule. It calls on the Nigerian authorities to establish a democratic constitutional regime as soon as possible.

Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Rumania and Slovakia associate themselves with this declaration.