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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union  
on Nicaragua**

The European Union welcomes the conduct of the elections in Nicaragua resulting in the formation of the new Government headed by Dr Arnaldo Aleman, which took office on 10 January.

In these circumstances, the outcome of the elections must be respected by all Nicaragua's political forces.

The EU is aware of the challenge ahead for Nicaragua's new administration, which faces an extensive programme of social and economic reforms, already embarked on by the Government of Mrs Chamorro and only achievable with the consensus of the political groups and with parliamentary agreement between the party in Government and the Opposition.

In this connection, the EU welcomes the recent meeting between the President and the Opposition leader, Mr Ortega, and hopes that this will be the first step in establishing constructive cooperation towards the consolidation of democracy, economic reform and social development in Nicaragua.

The EFTA countries members of the European Economic Area, the Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union and the associated country Cyprus align themselves with this declaration.