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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
regarding the student and secondary school pupils manifestations in fYROM**

1. The European Union expresses deep concern about recent outbursts of student and secondary school pupils manifestations in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which produced (anti)-ethnic slogans in the streets of both Skopje and Tetovo.
2. The EU is aware of the difficulties which the country faces transforming into a market economy and a pluralistic multi-ethnic society.
3. The extent of EU support for the transition process in fYROM has recently been confirmed during the G-24/consultative group meeting on 25 and 26 February 1997.
4. A stable and prosperous country is not only in the interest of the population of fYROM but also essential for the stability of the region as a whole.
5. The European Union supports the appeal of the prime minister of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the citizens of the country to continue to work for a strengthening of interethnic trust and respect. The European Union calls upon all political forces in fYROM to work together in a peaceful and democratic way in order to find a solution for still existing problems.
6. The European Union recalls that in accordance with commitments undertaken in the framework of the OSCE and Council of Europe, respect for ethnic and national minorities is of utmost importance for national stability and the development of good neighbourly relations.
7. The European Union reaffirms its support for fYROM in keeping internal social and political stability during this difficult stage of transition to a civil society and a market economy.