

**P R E S S   R E L E A S E**

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**European Union declaration**  
**on the eve of the parliamentary elections in Albania**

The European Union urges the Albanian political parties and all citizens to participate in the elections on 29 June and 6 July in a peaceful and orderly manner acting in a spirit of true reconciliation. The EU expects the Albanian parties to respect the results of legitimate elections and to accept the assessment on the validity of the elections to be pronounced by Mme Lalumière (for the OSCE Chairman-in-Office) in cooperation with Sir Russell Johnston (for the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly) and Mr Ruperez (for the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly).

While the holding of free and fair elections is Albania's own responsibility, the EU reaffirms its commitment to provide support for the elections within the co-ordinating framework of the OSCE including a large number of monitors from Member States.

The EU stresses the importance of the consolidation of the national reconciliation process after the elections and expresses the hope that they will lead to the formation of a new government which will enjoy broad support amongst the Albanian population as well as co-operation of all political forces in Albania. A new Government must, with the assistance of the international community as a whole and EU in particular, restore confidence in the democratic structures of the country and lead Albania toward economic recovery.

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The EU is prepared to support economic recovery in Albania provided Albania meets the conditions set at the Preparatory Conference in Rome on 26 May 1997. Future relations between the EU and Albania will depend on full restoration of democratic principles, respect for human and minority rights, sound economic practices as well as cooperative relations between Albania and its neighbours. The continuation of the process of national reconciliation following the elections will be a prerequisite for defining the terms for international aid.

The EU expresses support and appreciation for the neutral and impartial way in which the Multinational Protection Force - in which several EU Member States participate - is carrying out its tasks in accordance with the relevant UNSC resolutions, in close cooperation with the Albanian authorities.

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

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