

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

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**STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION
ON THE ACCESSION OF RUSSIA TO THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

The European Union has followed closely and with interest the process of democratic reform in Russia, including the calling of a general election for 17 December, and is pleased that the procedure for Russia's accession to the Council of Europe has been revived.

The European Union hopes that resumption of the examination of Russia's application by the Parliamentary Assembly will lead to that country's swift incorporation in the Council of Europe, when it is established that the significant progress required to meet the standards imposed on its members has been made.

The European Union is confident that the forthcoming accession of Russia to the Council of Europe will underpin the process of political reform and the commitment to democratic principles and the observance and protection of human rights. In that connection the European Union underlines the importance it attaches to cooperation programmes and the follow-up mechanisms established.