

PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 20 October 1995

10915/95 (Presse 292)
P. 94/95

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

The European Union, in its Council of General Affairs on 2 October, was pleased to hear that the Head of State of Nigeria, General Abacha, had announced on 1 October to commute the sentences of those accused of the failed coup d'état.

However, the EU would like to express its disappointment about the severe sentences announced for the alleged coup plotters. The EU is also concerned about the lack of transparency over the legal process during their trial. The EU deplores the continued use of secret military tribunals and suspension of habeas corpus.

Among the guiding principles of the EU's common foreign policy are the defence of democracy and respect for human rights. The Union believes that upholding these principles in Nigeria is one of the pillars of peaceful coexistence in the country and an essential factor in the development of good relations with the European Union.

The EU notes that General Abacha has set out a three-year timetable for a transition to civilian democratic rule. The EU hopes that he will accelerate that programme, and allow a rapid resumption of political activity leading to free and fair elections. The release of all political detainees will be an essential step in that process.

The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the Union align themselves with this statement.

10915/95 (Presse 292 - G)

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