

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

Brussels, 3 July 1997

9635/97 (Presse 234)
P. 74/97

**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
concerning the draft law on local authorities in Serbia**

The European Union has learned that on 30 June 1997 a discussion took place in the Serbian parliament on a draft law on local authorities.

The European Union considers that such a discussion on an electoral law affecting local government may be in keeping with the recommendations of the Special Envoy of the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, Mr Felipe González. A new law in this context undeniably presents an opportunity to promote the development of democracy in the FRY.

The European Union therefore considers that a reform in this context would be effective only if it were based on a general consensus between the government and the political class of the country and if it conformed to internationally recognized standards.

The law must not, therefore, be such as may accentuate the ethnic divisions in the FRY. To that end, the European Union wishes to call upon the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to accept the offers of advice made at international level, particularly by the OSCE, for the final formulation of the law.

The European Union wishes to point out that, by granting autonomous preferential measures and in the context of the regional approach, it has intimated that it expects the recommendations of the González report to be fully and quickly implemented. In particular the recommendations include effective efforts to initiate a political dialogue between the authorities and the opposition. The future evolution of relations between the FRY and the EU will depend, among other things, on improved progress towards greater democracy within the FRY.