

PRESS RELEASE

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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on the situation in Chechnya**

The European Union is dismayed by the public executions which recently took place in Chechnya, and the arbitrary trials which preceded them. It would point out, as stated by the United Nations Committee on Human Rights, that public executions are incompatible with human dignity.

The Union supports the statements made, inter alia, by President Yeltsin and the Douma and appeals to the Chechen authorities, and in particular to President Maskhadov, to comply with the moratorium on the application of the death penalty decreed in the Russian Federation when it joined the Council of Europe and to ensure that no other execution takes place.

The Union reiterates its deep concern at the kidnapping of humanitarian aid staff. It hopes that the Chechen authorities will do their utmost to create the requisite conditions of safety to enable non-governmental organizations to continue their humanitarian and aid work in Chechnya. It considers that the presence and activities of non-governmental organizations are put at risk by the precarious security situation, thus aggravating the suffering of the Chechen people.

The Union appeals to the Chechen authorities to redouble their efforts to arrest and bring to trial those responsible for the murder of six Red Cross workers in December.

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.