

PRESS RELEASE

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

The European Union is deeply concerned at reports of preparations by the Afghan factions for further fighting this spring, including the supply of arms from outside Afghanistan. The food blockade on central Afghanistan, which reportedly claimed many lives is also a matter of grief.

The continuation of Afghanistan's civil war can only exacerbate the deep problems besetting the population: the serious humanitarian crisis; widespread breaches of international humanitarian law and violations of human rights, including discrimination against women and girls; devastation of war stricken areas; and the trauma suffered by refugees.

It also fosters practices which are contrary to international standards - the trafficking and abuse of drugs, and the harbouring and export of terrorism. It threatens the stability and economic development of the whole region.

The European Union strongly endorses the conclusion of the "six plus two" group of Afghanistan's neighbours that the war must be brought to a rapid close. The EU urges the parties to work with the United Nations on an immediate ceasefire, and to engage in a serious effort to get a peace process underway.

The European Union recalls its appeal to Afghanistan's neighbouring states in its Common Position on Afghanistan to end the supply of weapons, fuel and other materials for military use to the warring factions, and to exercise their influence in a positive and constructive manner in support of the UN's peace efforts."