

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

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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on the National Assembly Elections in Nigeria**

The European Union has been following closely the so-called transition to civil rule in Nigeria and has concluded that the process is a failure.

The final results of the March 1997 local elections and the final vote count for the December 1997 State Assembly elections have still not been released. The National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON) and Transition Implementation Committee (TIC) documents on these elections have not been published. On the basis of these observations, and the recent announcement that the five registered parties have adopted Abacha as their consensus Presidential candidate, the European Union considers that the transition programme is in grave danger of being compromised.

None of the five registered parties met the deadline set by NECON for the submission of the list of their candidates for the 25 April National Assembly. Indeed, some lists of candidates were still unpublished on the day of the election. The EU is concerned about the arbitrary disqualification of candidates and the continued non-publication of the draft Constitution which provides the legal basis for these elections. In addition, many Nigerians who might otherwise wish to participate in such elections remain in jail.

The European Union concludes that the extremely low voter turnout for the State and National Assembly elections demonstrates that the Nigerian people no longer have confidence in the transition process.