

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 Tajikistan**

The EU expresses its satisfaction at the readiness of the Government and United Opposition to reopen discussion of a law which would have excluded parties based on religious principles from participating in political life.

It expects the parties to find a compromise which avoids exclusion of opposition groupings on technical grounds, and guarantees representation of all political forces in future elections in compliance with the Peace Accord of June 1997.

It notes that the President is willing to respect the search for a compromise in the mixed commission, and to refrain from signing the draft bill into law during the 20 day review period.

The EU shares the general international expectation that the Government and UTO will accept their responsibility for the peaceful future of Tajikistan, will respect the commitments undertaken by them in Moscow in June 1997, and will jointly promote the peace process.

The EU reaffirms its willingness to consider further support for the consolidation of a peaceful transition in Tajikistan once full implementation of the Peace Accord is under way.

The Central and Eastern European countries and Cyprus associated with the European Union and the EFTA countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area align themselves with this declaration.