

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 fate of Ethiopian and Eritrean civilians**

The European Union condemns the atrocities committed against civilians by both sides in the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and in particular those which have occurred since the conclusion of the agreement to cease hostilities on 18 June 2000.

The European Union calls on the Governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea, which are accountable for the fate of nationals of the other country under their authority, to put an end to these acts, in particular by complying fully with their obligations towards these nationals, as defined in the Geneva Convention and by facilitating, in cooperation with the ICRC, the return of any individuals who so wish to their country of origin. It calls on both of these countries to ensure that the ICRC and the other competent organisations have complete and unconditional access to all locations where civilians are being held and, in accordance with the Geneva Convention, to prisoner-of-war camps.

The European Union reaffirms its support for the peace process and for the consolidation of the cease-fire between Ethiopia and Eritrea, which must not be undermined by any violation of the rights of nationals of either country. The Union wants the proximity talks to be resumed as soon as possible with both Governments taking part with the resolve to reach a lasting peace agreement.

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