

PRESS RELEASE

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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on the coup d'état in Sierra Leone**

The European Union was concerned to hear that a coup d'état had taken place in Sierra Leone on 16 January 1996. This runs counter to the expectations of the international community even more since the country is plagued, inter alia, by a deteriorating humanitarian situation to the detriment of the civilian population.

The EU took also note of the public commitment made by Brigadier Bio, Chairman of the NPRC, to continue with the democratic transition process.

The EU hopes that the last events will in no way compromise free and democratic elections, which are scheduled to take place on 26 February 1996. The EU is convinced that a democratic system in which all political factions participate, and a fully accountable civilian government which respects human rights, remain the best guarantee of stability and prosperity for the people of Sierra Leone. This in turn is an important element in the stability of the entire region of West Africa.

The EU will continue to monitor the situation and expects that all necessary measures will be taken to enable the democratisation process to go ahead according to the stated intention.

The EU's continued support for this process will be assessed in the light of progress made in this regard.

The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union and the associated countries Cyprus and Malta align themselves with this declaration.