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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on the presidential elections in Nigeria**

The European Union welcomes the holding of presidential elections in Nigeria on 27 February 1999. These elections represent a significant step on the way to the installation of a democratically elected civilian government after fifteen years of military rule in Nigeria which will be ended by the handing-over of power to the democratically elected civil president on 29 May 1999.

The European Union welcomes the fact that, according to reports from its observers, the voting procedures were held on the basis of a multi-party-system and universal suffrage and were based on democratic principles. The European Union congratulates the people of Nigeria on an election held in the spirit of openness, and which proceeded peacefully. It appeals to all parties concerned to accept and honour the results that generally reflect the wish of the Nigerian people. The European Union notes with satisfaction that despite tight deadlines and difficult organisational conditions the Independent Electoral Commission was able to organise the election in such a way as to enable the Nigerian majority of voters to express their will. However, a number of serious irregularities were encountered and should be investigated.

The European Union is aware that the newly elected President and his Government have a major task before them. The European Union assures the Nigerian people and Government of its willingness to continue to promote political and economic reforms and its readiness to cooperate with the elected authorities towards strengthening the rule of law, the respect of human rights and good governance in Nigeria. The European Union hopes that the new Government, in the interest of the entire country, will be able to succeed in reconciling all those who opposed each other in the past and will thus lead Nigeria to a better future and enable it to assume its due role in the international community of states and peoples.

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