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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on Côte d'Ivoire**

The European Union deplors the restrictions imposed on voters' freedom of choice by the Côte d'Ivoire Supreme Court's decision of 1 December 2000 barring Mr Alassane Ouattara, President of the RDR, from standing in the parliamentary elections on 10 December. It considers that this decision mars preparations for those elections, as it could lead to the absence of a significant portion of Côte d'Ivoire's electorate from the electoral process.

The European Union strongly urges the Côte d'Ivoire authorities to do everything possible to re-establish national cohesion and take account of the balance of all the country's political forces. It calls on the authorities and on all political forces to act responsibly and ban all forms of violence. It considers it desirable to seek a political solution to the current crisis, so that democracy can be fully restored in an atmosphere of calm.

The European Union, recalling the terms of the consultations on the EU-ACP Convention in the first half of 2000, will assess its support for Côte d'Ivoire at the end of the whole process of return to constitutional legality, depending how it unfolds.

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.

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