

PRESS RELEASE

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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union  
on the Sharm-El-Sheikh Memorandum**

The European Union congratulates Prime Minister Barak and President Arafat for the conclusion of difficult negotiations between the parties of the Wye River agreement. The memorandum is an important step which re-establishes confidence and gives new optimism for accelerated final status talks.

The EU is firmly committed to the Middle East Peace Process and is ready to facilitate talks and implementation of the existing agreements.

The EU hopes that the memorandum opens the way for a final, just, lasting and comprehensive peace within a reasonable timeframe. All tracks of the peace process should now be activated by taking concrete steps.

Foreign Minister Tarja Halonen has sent today a letter on behalf of the European Union to President Arafat in order to support the Sharm El Sheikh Memorandum.