

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 closure of the Fazilet Party in Turkey**

The European Union notes with concern the decision of the Turkish Constitutional Court on 22 June to order the closure of the Virtue Party, to confiscate its assets and to ban certain members from being members of the Turkish Grand National Assembly or from further political activities for five years. This decision has implications for democratic pluralism and freedom of expression in Turkey, a candidate for membership in the EU.

The decision highlights the need for Turkey to move ahead with political reforms in order to implement the priorities of the Accession Partnership adopted by the EU on 8 March 2001. The EU is aware of the current efforts of the Turkish Government and the Turkish Grand National Assembly to implement a constitutional reform, following the presentation by Turkey of its National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis. The EU assumes that this process will be concluded in a near future and in conformity with the Copenhagen political criteria.

**Internet: <http://ue.eu.int/Newsroom>
E-mail: press.office@consilium.eu.int**

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