

P R E S S R E L E A S E

Brussels, 5 October 2001

12381/2/01 REV 2 (Presse 339)

P 157/01

**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on Eritrea**

The European Union deplores the decision of the Eritrean Government to declare persona non grata H.E. Antonio Bandini, Ambassador of Italy in Eritrea and Representative of the Presidency of the European Union in Asmara.

The European Union notes that this decision was notified only a few hours after a demarche was carried out by all the EU Ambassadors resident in Asmara to express the gravest concern about recent events in Eritrea which had led to the imprisonment of a number of known personalities advocating democratic reforms and to the suppression of the independent press.

In the same demarche, the EU had underlined that the abovementioned events contradicted the declared policy of the Eritrean Government and the commitments undertaken in favour of democracy, rule of law, human rights and good governance.

The EU stresses that the expulsion of the Representative of the Presidency of the European Union seriously undermines the EU relations with Eritrea and will lead to a review of such relations in the light of the Cotonou Agreement.

The EU confirms its commitment to support the development of Eritrea, as well as peace, stability and cooperation in the region. The EU underlines that essential factors of development are the building of democratic institutions, rule of law, respect of human rights, freedom of the press and growth of a strong civil society.

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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