

**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 Democratic Republic of Congo**

The EU and its member states reaffirm their commitment to the Lusaka agreement which offers the only realistic prospect of lasting peace and security in the Great Lakes region. The EU underlines its readiness to provide full political, diplomatic and resource support for the implementation of the Lusaka agreement, provided that the parties show the necessary political will and implement the agreement. The EU urges all parties to refrain from any declaration or action that could jeopardize the peace process.

The EU and the member states will sustain their support for the ceasefire and confidence building measures, in particular those decided by the Joint Military Commission supervising the military aspects of the agreement. The EU welcomes the deployment of the OAU and JMC observers in the DRC. The EU, for an amount of up to 1.2 million Euro, and the member states are providing financial and practical assistance for the JMC. They declare their readiness to continue and as necessary augment this support.

The EU supports the UN liaison officers now deploying in the region, which also includes personnel from several EU Member states and welcomes the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the UN for the Democratic Republic of Congo. The EU also supports the UN Secretary General recommendations and Namibian draft resolution on the next steps to be taken for a rapid deployment of UN observers in the DRC. The EU affirms its readiness to support, in due time, a UN peacekeeping force to assist the parties in implementing the Lusaka agreement.

The EU stresses the necessity of ensuring a peaceful and permanent disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of the militia groups currently operating in the region, with a view to promote justice, national reconciliation and respect of human rights. The EU underlines in particular that members of the ex-Far/Interahamwe accused of crimes of genocide should be brought to justice, while all others who accept the DDR process should be allowed to return to Rwanda without fear of persecution. The EU affirms its willingness to assist the parties in this field.

The EU is ready to support the national dialogue in the DRC. The European Commission and the member states have funding available to assist the dialogue, as soon as the parties themselves are

ready. The EU calls on all concerned parties to move swiftly and without preconditions to the start of the dialogue, and encourage the OAU and President Chiluba in their efforts to, as a first step, identify a suitable facilitator.

The EU stresses its concern at the use of diamonds, gold and other resources of the DRC to fund military operations in the region and calls on all the parties to ensure that all commercial dealings of this nature are legal under the relevant domestic and international law, transparent, consistent with states' arrangements with the International Financing Institutions, and benefit the people of the DRC, not private individuals.

The EU affirms its readiness to provide humanitarian assistance to all those in need in the DRC and to make available development assistance once peace is established and mechanisms are in place to allow effective implementation of assistance.

The EU affirms its support for an eventual international conference on security and cooperation in the Great Lakes region to address and resolve the underlying causes of conflict in the region. The EU encourages the OAU and all African countries concerned to begin preparatory work as soon as the main elements of the Lusaka agreement have been implemented and announces its readiness to cooperate with the parties by providing technical and financial assistance in this regard.

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