

**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 Bangladesh**

Bangladesh's European Union partners reaffirm their strong interest in cooperation with Bangladesh for the purpose of the country's democratic, social and economic development including the ultimate goal of elimination of poverty. They wish to recall that on 17 February 1999, negotiations on a new cooperation agreement between the European Community and Bangladesh were successfully concluded. Respect for human rights and democratic principles are among the most essential elements of this agreement.

The present situation in Bangladesh, however, is making effective cooperation increasingly difficult. Hartals and other forms of violent political confrontation endanger the lives and the well-being of innocent citizens, disrupt public life and inflict serious losses upon the economy which has not yet fully recovered from the effects of the catastrophic floods of 1998.

The European Union and its member states are seriously concerned about the deteriorating political situation and growing instability in Bangladesh. They call upon all parties and political office holders to show restraint and moderation and to abstain from the use of all forms of violence as a political weapon.

The lack of respect for elementary principles of democratic governance seriously hampers prospects for development. If political violence and intolerance should continue, foreign trade and investment will be negatively affected and collaboration in development will necessarily suffer to the detriment of all.

The European Union and its member states appeal to all political parties in Bangladesh to resolve their differences on the floor of parliament and through other legitimate ways. They call on the government and political leaders of the opposition alike to exercise responsible leadership on the basis of democratic principles, which require the respect for decisions of the parliamentary majority as well as the respect for the legitimate rights of the opposition.

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

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