

PRESS RELEASE

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**Declaration by the Presidency, on behalf of the European Union,
on the peace process in Colombia**

1. The European Union stands by its active support for the peace process in Colombia and for the courageous efforts made by President Pastrana. It feels that there is no suitable alternative to a negotiated solution to the internal conflict and that it would be wrong to put that process on the back burner, pending the forthcoming elections. The negotiation mechanism should, moreover, be strengthened, with all parties contributing.
2. The European Union calls upon the FARC-EP to return to the negotiating table, inter alia in order to discuss the issues agreed on at San Francisco de la Sombra in October 2001. It commends the resumption of dialogue between the Government and the ELN. It hopes that both movements will show firm resolve in seeking concrete results leading towards a peaceful and lasting settlement of the conflict.
3. The European Union wholeheartedly supports all efforts to bring respect for human rights and international humanitarian law by all parties involved.
4. The European Union reiterates its vigorous and steadfast condemnation of the practices of abduction, extortion and other crimes, which are a violation of human rights and of international humanitarian law. Such crimes, which jeopardise the peace process, must be condemned by all parties to the conflict. It calls upon the armed groups to free all hostages – whether foreign or Colombian – and to forswear such practices immediately. For the time being, the EU Member States will not issue any new visas or residence permits to representatives of those armed groups, without prejudice to the continuation of efforts by EU Member States participating in talks between the Colombian parties.
5. At the request of the Colombian Government and of the parties to the conflict, some Member States of the Union are participating in the talks which the Government of President Andrés Pastrana has established with the ELN and the FARC. The EU supports

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these efforts to achieve a negotiated solution to the conflict. However, it emphasises that the EU position *vis-à-vis* the armed groups in Colombia will have to be examined and revised in the light of respect for human rights, international humanitarian law and diplomatic immunity.

6. The European Union is particularly concerned at the violent actions of the paramilitary, who are committing more and more crimes with total impunity. It urges the Colombian Government to continue and to step up its efforts to disarm the paramilitary and bring the full force of the law to bear on those responsible for crimes committed – whoever the perpetrators.
7. Taking into account the principle of shared responsibility, the European Union considers it of vital importance that the efforts already made to combat illicit drug crops and drug production and trafficking continue at both local and regional level, while protecting biodiversity and the environment.
8. In order to reduce socio-economic inequalities in Colombia, the European Union considers it essential that a programme of decisive socio-economic reforms be elaborated and implemented as a matter of urgency, regardless of the uncertainties of the peace process.
9. The European Union will endeavour to fulfil the autonomous commitments entered into under the European programme of support for the Colombian peace process, insofar as security problems do not hamper it.
10. The European Union acknowledges the very valuable work of the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Representative in the context of the peace process. It feels that the role of the United Nations has never been more important and that its representative should be more closely involved in that process. At the same time, the Union calls upon the Colombian Government to facilitate implementation of the mandate of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.
11. The European Union attaches great importance to holding an intensive dialogue with all candidates in the presidential elections. It would like them to make it State policy to seek a negotiated peace.

The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union, the associated countries Cyprus and Malta and the EFTA countries belonging to the European Economic Area align themselves with this declaration.
