

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 situation in Burundi**

The European Union welcomes the setting up of the transitional government of national union in Burundi on 1 November and encourages the ongoing efforts to put the other transitional institutions in place quickly. It invites the new government to implement without delay the reforms provided for in the Arusha agreement and to find solutions to the most urgent questions - a ceasefire in the armed conflict, justice for all, and the poverty of the Burundian people.

At the same time, the European Union is extremely concerned by the upsurge in violence in the armed conflict in recent weeks. The civilian population is its chief victim. In particular, it condemns unreservedly the acts of violence committed in recent days by armed FDD and FNL groups against educational establishments, schoolchildren and health centres. It also roundly condemns the reprisals carried out by the warring factions against the civilian population.

It urges all those involved to abandon the logic of war and to enter into negotiations without delay, in particular those due to begin in November under the auspices of the Gabonese President Omar Bongo and the South African Vice-President Jacob Zuma. Pending a final end to hostilities, it urges the warring factions to cease indiscriminate warfare which harms the innocent civilian population without distinction, and calls for an immediate suspension of the fighting.

It urges the countries in the region to cease their support for this armed conflict and, instead, to encourage all armed groups to return to the negotiating table as soon as possible. The conflict in Burundi can be solved only through negotiations.

It appeals to the responsibility of the new transitional government as a whole to exert its influence on all the warring factions to persuade them to return to the negotiating table immediately and make every effort to spare the civilian population.

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The EU is willing to give political backing to the negotiations which have already begun for a ceasefire. It is also ready to give financial and logistical support to a programme of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of the present combatants when arms have been laid down.

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.
