

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 Angola**

The European Union strongly condemns the attack by UNITA near the town of Caxito and the abduction of children. It calls for the immediate release and safe return of all abducted children, and stresses the importance of bringing the perpetrators to justice. This attack represents a further example of the terrible distress that the war in Angola continues to inflict on the majority of its citizens.

A peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict, based on the Lusaka protocol, is necessary to the democratic and economic development of the country in the interests of all its people. The EU notes that elections were last held in Angola in 1992 and reiterates the importance it attaches to the Government's commitment to hold free and fair general elections in the second half of 2002. It is essential that these elections be preceded by a period of intensive preparation aimed at developing the democratic culture necessary for the conduct of successful elections.

The EU is encouraged by some recent developments, including the Amnesty Law and the establishment by the National Assembly of a Standing Committee on Peace. It welcomes the indication by President dos Santos in his speech in Luanda on 2 May that his Government is ready to engage in a dialogue on how peace may be achieved on the basis of the Lusaka Protocol. The EU notes that the President was responding to an earlier radio interview with Mr Savimbi and strongly urges the UNITA leader to engage seriously and effectively in the search for peace and to comply with the Lusaka protocol.

The EU supports the role the Churches and Civil Society are playing in promoting a culture of openness and dialogue. The EU welcomes the continuing engagement of the UN Secretary General in the search for peace and reaffirms its commitment to the enforcement of UNSC sanctions against UNITA for its failure to comply with the provisions of the Lusaka Protocol.

The Government's decision to establish a Fund for Peace and National Reconciliation to assist the reintegration into society of former soldiers can play a useful role provided that all the operations of

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the Fund are fair and transparent. The fund should operate alongside a Poverty Reduction Strategy which addresses the needs of the communities to which the ex-combatants will be returning.

In this context the EU reiterates the importance it attaches to the fulfilment of economic and social reforms. It welcomes the Government's engagement with the IMF in a Staff Monitored Programme and encourages it to meet its economic targets in order to progress to the conclusion of an agreement for a Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility. It urges the Government to implement as speedily as possible measures agreed under these programmes and to actively promote good governance in particular concerning transparency issues and the fight against corruption.

The EU remains deeply concerned at the prolonged severe humanitarian crises that has left three million people declared as internally displaced persons. It urges the Government to expand its humanitarian assistance programme (PNEAH) as an expression of its ultimate responsibility for the well being of all citizens in Angola. The EU deplores the continued difficulties regarding the distribution of humanitarian assistance for displaced persons. The EU encourages the Government to spare no efforts in order to better secure the access of humanitarian aid within Government controlled areas. The EU demands all parties in the conflict, and in particular UNITA, to stop their minelaying activities.

On its part, the EU declares its willingness to continue to assist to mitigate the suffering caused by the war and to contribute to a better life for all Angolans.

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.
