

PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 26 December 1997

13670/97 (Presse 412)
P 124/97

**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on the peace agreement for Somalia**

The European Union has been following the process of national reconciliation in Somalia closely, in particular through the direct commitment of one of its members. It welcomes the peace agreement between the main Somali factions, which was signed in Cairo on 22 December, following on from the agreements reached in Nairobi, Sodere and Sanaa. It welcomes the fact that this agreement affirms the determination of faction representatives to preserve the status of Somalia as an independent, indivisible state within internationally recognized frontiers and congratulates Kenya, Ethiopia, Yemen and Egypt on the role which they have played in carrying forward this process.

The European Union notes with satisfaction that the Cairo talks were characterized by a constructive atmosphere and a spirit of fairness. It hopes that the national reconciliation conference due to be held in Baidoa (Somalia) on 15 February 1998 and open to all political forces in the country, without exception, will lead to the establishment of institutional bodies and be a further step on the road back to peace and democracy in the country and the restoration of stable and lasting State structures.

The European Union appeals urgently to all political forces to refrain from activities which could damage the peace process or place further obstacles in the way of national reconciliation. In that connection, the European Union is convinced that neighbouring countries, along with the OAU and the IGAD, can continue to play a constructive role, particularly through concerted diplomatic efforts.

The European Union states that it is ready to help the Somalis to reconstruct their country as soon as the reconciliation process is sufficiently far advanced and the general situation in the country so permits. It regrets the fact that humanitarian agencies and NGOs are at the moment having to face an unsafe situation and poor working conditions and it particularly deplores the recent attacks on the staff of humanitarian organizations and on humanitarian installations which have led to the withdrawal of aid workers from certain areas of the country.

The European Union calls on all Somali leaders to commit themselves firmly to creating the conditions needed to counteract successfully the disastrous effects of the floods which have hit Somalia and it appeals to them in particular to ensure that there are no further obstacles to international aid.

The European Union is convinced that, in the spirit of reconciliation which has made it possible to take significant steps along the road back to peace in Somalia, all political forces and all local leaders will participate in the joint efforts to restore a climate of security and non-violence in the country and to ensure de facto implementation of the Cairo agreements.
