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**STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENCY ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
CONCERNING THE DATE OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN THE
REPUBLIC OF CROATIA**

The European Union is following closely the current discussion in Croatia concerning the date of the parliamentary elections to be held, according to law, on the 27th of January 2000 at the latest.

The European Union has noted with concern that also dates very close after Christmas seem to have emerged as possible polling days.

The European Union draws attention to the fact that arrangements for international and domestic election monitoring could face difficulties, if elections are held too close after Christmas.

The European Union recognises that the choice of election date is a sovereign decision for Croatia. But a decision to hold elections between Christmas and New Year would give rise to doubts as to whether they would be both free and fair. The OSCE Mission to Croatia has said that elections in the Christmas period are completely unknown in the European context. The European Union fully endorses this statement.