

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 SIERRA LEONE**

The EU is deeply concerned at the ongoing crisis in Sierra Leone and at the increase in violent attacks on settlements and the country's economic assets. The EU deplores the consequent suffering and widespread displacement inflicted on the civilian population.

The EU strongly condemns the abduction of 17 foreign citizens. These are wholly innocent victims of the conflict. They should be released.

The EU urges all those concerned to take advantage of the initiatives, in particular those of the United Nations Secretary General and the Commonwealth Secretary General together with the countries of the region aimed at bringing about a peaceful solution to the conflict.