

**PRESS RELEASE**

Brussels, 22 May 1997

8316/97 (Presse 164)  
P 50/97

**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union  
on the transfer of power in Democratic Republic of Congo**

The European Union was encouraged that the change in Government in Kinshasa has taken place without widespread fighting. In this context it recalls the untiring diplomatic efforts of the UN, OAU, African countries and in particular South Africa, as well as those of the EU Special Envoy, to find a peaceful solution to the conflict. At the same time, it regrets the loss of life which occurred throughout the conflict.

The EU expresses the hope that the transitional Government will be as broadly based as possible in order to encompass the political aspirations of all of the people of the country. The European Union looks forward to the implementation of President Kabila's commitments to convene a constituent assembly within 60 days and to hold elections within two years. The Union restates its willingness to support the democratization process leading to free and fair elections, which should bring lasting peace, stability and prosperity for all the people of the country.

The transitional Government has the responsibility for promoting reconciliation between all the people of former Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of Congo. In this regard, respect for human rights and commitment to democracy will be essential.

The Union recalls that the new authorities are responsible for security throughout the country, including the protection and dignified treatment of refugees, large numbers of whom remain in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It is important that the humanitarian organizations have full and unrestricted access to them. The Union attaches importance to the implementation of Mr Kabila's earlier commitments in this regard and urges him to ensure that there is full respect for international humanitarian law, as well as to ensure the safety of humanitarian aid workers.

8316/97 (Presse 164 - G)

EN

The European Union regrets that the investigative mission of the UN Commission for Human Rights was prevented from visiting the country. It urges the new authorities to allow the United Nations to carry out its work in relation to human rights as a matter of urgency and to guarantee it unhindered access to all the regions it wishes to visit.

It is on this basis, and bearing in mind the huge problems of rehabilitation, as well as of economic and social reconstruction of the country, that the Union hopes to develop its relations with the Democratic Republic of Congo to help its people pursue their legitimate aspirations.

A Presidency-led mission, including the Commission and the EU Special Envoy, will convey the Union's views to the new authorities and, in the light of their visit, recommend appropriate next steps, including at the political level, to promote the EU's objectives in the region.

---