

PRESS RELEASE

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**Brussels, 20 May 1997 (27.05)
(OR. f)**

**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on Burundi**

The European Union notes with satisfaction the announcement made on 13 May by President Pierre Buyoya regarding the negotiations taking place in Rome on a cease-fire in Burundi, and the early opening, under the aegis of the former President of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, of political negotiations: these must bring together all the parties in Burundi.

In its view that announcement represents an important stage in the search for negotiated solutions to the conflict in Burundi. It encourages the parties concerned to begin this process without delay.

The European Union cautions them against any temptation to resort to force to impede the process of national reconciliation.

The European Union reiterates its concern at the humanitarian situation in the assembly camps and appeals to the Burundian Government to disperse those camps at the earliest opportunity.

The European Union refers to its declaration of 7 May in which it totally condemned the continued violence on the ground and in particular the massacres and atrocities committed against the civilian population. It urgently appeals to all armed groups to agree to an immediate cessation of hostilities in order to end the violence and create conditions conducive to starting negotiations in a climate of confidence and calm.

The European Union is ready to back the peace process with support at political level and with any practical assistance that proves necessary for the conduct of a peace process leading to the restoration of democracy. To that end its Special Envoy, Mr Ajello, will support the efforts of the mediator, Mr Julius Nyerere, in cooperation with the UN/OAU Special Representative, Mr Sahnoun, and the other international observers.
