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**DECLARATION BY THE PRESIDENCY ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION ON
THE RELOCATION OF NGO OFFICES IN KABUL, AFGHANISTAN**

The EU is deeply concerned by the decision of the Taliban authorities in Kabul to forcefully close the offices of international non-governmental organisations, expel NGO foreign workers and imprison NGO local personnel. These decisions have forced the NGOs to abandon their much needed help for the innocent civilian population of Kabul which now has to suffer the consequences of the local authorities decisions.

The EU further condemns the violation of premises of the EC Humanitarian Office in Kabul and the treatment of local ECHO staff by the Taliban authorities.

The EU donates two thirds of all humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, but the European Commission has now been obliged to suspend common funding by the Community for projects in Kabul. The EU earnestly desires to continue helping the Afghan people, who have already suffered so much from years of conflict. However, aid can only continue where it can be delivered in an effective and principled manner, without discrimination, and where humanitarian organisations are able to carry out their work freely and safely.

The EU once again calls upon all warring factions to end the bloodshed in Afghanistan and undertake serious steps towards a negotiated settlement. In this context, the EU welcomes the continuing efforts by prominent Afghans representing a broad spectrum of Afghan society, such as those who met in Bonn between July 18-23 in the framework of so-called Frankfurt process, to prepare for a Loya Jirga (grand assembly) as a time-honoured Afghan instrument for settling disputes.

The EU welcomes the position taken by the UN and fully supports its efforts to resolve the crisis in Kabul and to ensure adequate conditions for the delivery of aid. It hopes that NGOs will soon be able to return so that humanitarian needs can be met.

The Central and Eastern European countries and Cyprus associated with the European Union and the EFTA countries, members of the European Economic Area align themselves with this declaration.