

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
concerning the illegal occupying of farms in Zimbabwe**

The European Union has learnt with concern of the moves by groups of ex-combatants to illegally occupy more than 200 farms in Zimbabwe.

It notes that such moves are spreading and sometimes involve damage to property, threats and violence that are unacceptable in a democratic country. Occupying farms in this way seriously undermines the right of ownership and the freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution. It also threatens to compromise current agricultural work and future harvests at the very time when Zimbabwe is experiencing an unprecedented economic crisis and some of its food reserves have been destroyed by floods.

The European Union, which is Zimbabwe's principal development partner, therefore calls upon the Government to ensure respect for the law and maintain public order and civil protection. It reaffirms its commitment to orderly and transparent agrarian reform which respects the rights of all citizens and is compatible with the economic-development requirements of the country.

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

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