

PRESS RELEASE

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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on the Common Position concerning Nigeria**

The European Union welcomes the process of democratisation which has begun in Nigeria in recent months. It has taken note of the release of a large number of political prisoners, the establishment of the new electoral commission to prepare for the presidential election on 27 February 1999 and the commitment made by the Nigerian government to reestablish democratic politics characterised by respect for human rights and based on the rule of law.

Taking into account the positive developments observed in Nigeria, the European Union has, in accordance with its declaration of 18 September 1998, reviewed its common positions of 20 November and 4 December 1995 and the sanctions which they introduced. As a result, the Union has decided to lift all sanctions concerning visa restrictions, high-level visits (involving civil and military authorities) and sporting contacts, as well as those concerning the recall of European military attachés posted in Nigeria. The sanctions concerning the arms embargo, military cooperation and the training of military forces, with the exception of units not intended for preparation for combat encouraging respect for human rights and preparing the military for control by a democratic civilian government remain and are the subject of the new common position, entering into force on 1 November 1998.

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In the light of developments observed in Nigeria, and in particular the setting up of a democratically elected civilian government, the European Union is prepared to review, on or before 1 June 1999, the common position which will enter into force on 1 November 1998. With that in mind, it encourages the Nigerian government to continue with its transition programme to hand over power to a civilian government in May 1999 following free and fair elections.

Welcoming the developments which should see a civilian government in place in the coming months, the European Union reaffirms its support for the government of Nigeria in the current democratisation process, which should permit the normalisation of their relations and enable Nigeria to regain a place within the international community in keeping with its aspirations and capabilities.
