PRESS RELEASE

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Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on Sudan

The European Union is deeply concerned by the hostilities in Southern Sudan undermining seriously the international community's humanitarian efforts aimed at assisting the populations of these regions badly affected by famine.

The EU strongly appeals to both parties to extend the cease-fire in Bahr el Ghazal after 15 October 1998 and to urgently meet, at a high level of representation, in the technical committee on humanitarian assistance under the chairmanship of the United Nations, in order to consider appropriate ways to enable relief supplies to reach all areas in need.

The European Union and its public opinions will hardly understand and justify if, after all the efforts deployed, the humanitarian crisis in Bahr el Ghazal should worsen again, due to the lack of willingness of the GOS and the SPLA to agree on a timely extention of the cease-fire.

The European Union considers that the dramatic humanitarian situation prevailing in Southern Sudan demands from the parties to adopt a coherent and responsible attitude vis-à-vis the populations and reaffirms its full support to the efforts of IGAD in view of a negotiated solution of the ongoing civil war which is causing the suffering of the populations and instability of the region. The parties are urged to agree on an end of the hostilities and to accelerate the peace process within the IGAD peace initiative.

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The European Union also encourages the IGAD partners forum to continue and reinforce its support to the IGAD peace process as the appropriate framework for the search for a political solution of a conflict which has lasted for more than 15 years.

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.