

PRESS RELEASE

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Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union concerning the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

The European Union is deeply concerned by the ongoing crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It recalls its declaration of 11 August, and in particular its support for the principles of territorial integrity and the respect for the sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of Congo as well as its appeal for peaceful solutions to the current problems so that the process of reconstruction and democratisation can proceed.

The European Union is particularly alarmed by reports on human rights abuses in this country. These reports credibly allege rounding-up, detention, beating, torture, ethnic propaganda including hate radio broadcasts and in some cases summary execution of Tutsis and possibly civilians of other ethnic groups by authorities of the DRC on the one hand as well as severe human rights abuses being committed by rebel and possibly other forces on the other hand. The European Union strongly condemns all these violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and urges all parties to the conflict to take the necessary measures to prevent such violations by security forces under their command, to abstain from inciting ethnic hatred in order to avoid the expansion of the human rights violations in the region and not to persecute civilians on the grounds of nationality or ethnicity. The EU also calls on all parties to abstain from recruiting child soldiers.

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In this context the European Union believes it vitally important that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) as a neutral and independent organisation entrusted to ensure the application of international humanitarian law is granted unhindered access to persons currently being detained within the territory of the DRC. The EU therefore calls on the Government of the DRC and other conflict parties to follow up on their commitment to grant protection to those at risk and to provide the ICRC with all necessary information on the location of detention sites, to allow access to these sites and to provide adequate security for the detainees.

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.
