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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
in connection with the incoming Ministerial Mission
of the Co-Presidency of the IPF Committee on Sudan**

In view of the incoming Ministerial Mission to the region of the Co-Presidency of the IPF Committee on Sudan, the European Union, while recognising the progresses and the efforts made so far, reiterates the importance of extending the current cease-fire in time and renews its appeal for its geographical expansion.

The European Union recognises the acute need for continued humanitarian assistance to the people of southern Sudan, and calls on the Government and SPLM/A sides to continue their cooperation with the international emergency relief efforts.

The extension of the present cease-fire would allow the international community to continue to provide assistance to the populations of southern Sudan. It would also be regarded by the EU as an important sign of the willingness of the parties to effectively contribute to the IGAD efforts to bring to an end the Sudanese conflict through negotiations. These negotiations are to be resumed soon.

The European Union renews its support to the Ministerial Mission of the Co-Presidency of the IPF Committee on Sudan, which will start on 23 January, whose main objectives will be to discuss with the parties, in close consultation with the Kenyan Chairman of the IGAD Ministerial Sub-Committee on south Sudan conflict, appropriate ways and means to consolidate, and possibly expand, the present cease-fire as well as to accelerate the peace negotiations, along the lines of the conclusions reached at the last Ministerial Meeting of the IPF Committee on Sudan, held in Rome on 19-20 November 1998.

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