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Declaration by the European Union on the situation in Chechnya

The European Union is seriously concerned about developments in Chechnya.

The Union deeply deplores the renewed escalation of violence and the appalling loss of civilian lives in connection with recent fighting in Chechnya. Reports of unprovoked attacks by Russian forces on civil targets, including massive bombardments of the towns of Sernovodsk and Samaskhi is a matter for deep concern. At the same time the Union categorically condemns all threats or acts of terrorism, such as the recent hostage taking in Kizlyar.

The Union expresses its preoccupation with the recent and severe worsening of the human rights situation. It calls on all sides to respect international humanitarian law, to restore respect for human rights and it expects full cooperation in facilitating distribution of medical and humanitarian assistance.

The European Union calls upon the parties to refrain from further violence. It continues to believe that a negotiated settlement, with participation of all parties, is the only possible way to resolve the conflict. It urges the parties to return to the cease-fire agreed in July 1995 and resume negotiations at the earliest possible hour.

The European Union recalls that Russia has upon accession to the Council of Europe on 28 February 1996 committed itself to settling internal as well as international disputes by peaceful means and respecting strictly the provisions of international humanitarian law. The establishment of the ad hoc committee on Chechnya under the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe is welcomed.

The European Union reaffirms its full support for the OSCE Chairman in Office and the Assistance Group in carrying out their mandate, including on human rights issues. Attention is drawn to the readiness of the OSCE to assist in reestablishing necessary contacts and dialogue. The Union supports any joint efforts that the Council of Europe and the OSCE may exercise.

The European Union looks forward to new initiatives from the Russian government in order to bring about a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Chechnya.