

PRESS RELEASE

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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on Slovakia**

The European Union welcomes with satisfaction the ratification by the Slovak parliament, during its session of March 26th 1996, of the "Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the Republic of Hungary and the Slovak Republic", signed on March 19th 1995 in Paris. The European Union is convinced that the coming into force of this bilateral treaty will highly contribute to further development of close relations with Hungary and to the reinforcement of stability and security in the region.

The European Union has also learnt that a certain number of amendments to the Slovak criminal code were approved by the parliament during the same session. The European Union is concerned about certain provisions in the amendments, which appear to affect the freedom of expression and other democratic rights and expresses the expectation that these provisions will be carefully considered with a view to finding solutions in accordance with democratic principles and in a way which is compatible with the conclusions of the Copenhagen summit of the European Union and with the EU membership for which Slovakia has applied.