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Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union concerning the Referendum on Constitutional reform in Bahrain

The European Union welcomes the result of the referendum on constitutional reform held in Bahrain on 14-15 February and feels encouraged by the large participation in the referendum and the overwhelming majority by which the reform project was approved. The European Union would also like to commend the Emir of Bahrain for creating a suitable environment for the success of the referendum by granting an amnesty which has led to the release of a large number of political prisoners. The widening of citizens' participation in government and the separation of powers, stipulated in the "National Charter", are positive steps towards democratic reform in Bahrain.

The European Union finds it particularly encouraging that women had the possibility to participate in the referendum and expresses its hope that democratic rights for women, including the right to vote and stand for election, will be permanently enshrined in the future constitution of Bahrain.

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

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