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**Declaration by the Presidency, on behalf of the European Union,
on the elections in Abkhazia, Georgia**

The European Union is deeply concerned at the intention of the Abkhaz side to hold parliamentary elections on 23 November 1996.

The Union considers that such elections should only take place in the framework of a comprehensive political settlement which would include the determination through negotiations of the political status of Abkhazia, respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders, and with the guaranteed possibility of full participation of all refugees and displaced persons. The EU fully supports the statement of the President of the United Nations Security Council that the conditions necessary for the holding of such elections are not present at this time.

The EU calls on the Abkhaz side to cancel these elections and urges both sides to refrain from any action that could heighten tension in the region, and to resume discussions towards a comprehensive political settlement.
