

Brussels, 6 April 2001

7591/01 (Presse 135)

P 71/01

**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on the Presidential elections in Benin**

In common with all international observers, the European Union welcomes the successful handling of Benin's Presidential elections in which the people of Benin demonstrated their will with responsibility and civic spirit. It considers that the proper holding of the elections enables Benin to continue the democratic renewal initiated ten years ago.

The European Union considers that any disputes that harmed the electoral race were due mainly to imperfections in the organisation and monitoring of the elections. It emphasises the importance of analysing the causes of such malfunctions and expresses its willingness to help in this respect.

The European Union calls upon the Beninese public authorities as a whole to continue strengthening the democratic process under way by actually implementing the laws on decentralisation and resolutely to relaunch the other structural reforms which will make it possible to promote growth and reduce poverty.

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.