

P R E S S R E L E A S E

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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
concerning the development of the situation in the Mano River Union countries**

The European Union expresses its satisfaction at the progress made in the dialogue between the three Mano River Union countries, in particular at the recent meetings held by their Ministers for Foreign Affairs in Monrovia, Freetown and Conakry.

The European Union welcomes the declarations made and the commitments entered into at those meetings concerning in particular joint action by those States against the groups involved in the events which destabilise the region, the establishment of a joint patrol at the borders between the three countries and combating the proliferation of small arms. It calls on the Mano River Union countries to make progress on those issues as quickly as possible.

The European Union also welcomes the prospect of a meeting between the Heads of State of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia in January 2002 as proposed by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs.

The European Union wishes to assure the three Heads of State of its support in their search for a solution to the conflicts persisting in the sub-region. It reiterates its willingness to contribute to the dialogue between their countries, in particular through the Presidency's Special Representative for West Africa, Mr Hans Dahlgren.

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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