

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 Madagascar's presidential elections**

The European Union is an important partner in Madagascar's economic, social and institutional development process. As such, it is keeping an interested and careful watch on the preparation and organisation of the presidential elections on 16 December 2001.

With reference to the Common Position of 25 May 1998 concerning human rights, democratic principles, the rule of law and good governance in Africa and to the importance attached to those principles in the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement signed in Cotonou on 23 June 2000, the European Union welcomes the Malagasy authorities' commitment to ensuring that the elections are held in accordance with democratic procedures.

The European Union hopes that all operations involved in the elections – compiling of electoral registers, organisation of polling stations, polling itself and counting of votes – will pass off calmly, fairly and with the utmost transparency.

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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