

PRESS RELEASE

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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on East Timor**

The European Union welcomes the positive results of the recent ministerial meeting under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General, where the Indonesian Foreign Minister Alatas officially announced Indonesia's new policy towards East Timor.

The European Union takes note of Indonesia's position that a wide ranging autonomy within the constitutional framework of the Republic of Indonesia is the best option for the time being and to submit this proposal to a consultation by the East Timorese. Should the proposal be rejected by the East Timorese, the Indonesian Government will recommend that the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), to be elected in June, revokes the Annexation Act of 1978 and accepts the independence of East Timor.

The European Union welcomes that this new Indonesian policy recognises that no lasting solution to this problem can be found without the consultation of the people of East Timor and that the parties concerned agreed to examine UN proposals for an agreement on a procedure to accommodate the Indonesian proposals with the exercise of self-determination. The European Union is indeed of the opinion that the method of consultation of the East Timorese will be a key issue in this context.

Considering these developments which have established a renewed impetus to the UN sponsored talks, the European Union emphasizes the necessity of international support for the UN Secretary-General's efforts.

The European Union also welcomes the transfer of Mr. Xanana Gusmao from prison into house arrest. In this context the European Union urges the Indonesian authorities to free completely Mr. Xanana Gusmao and other Timorese political prisoners in order to create the best possible conditions to resolve the East Timorese issue.

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In the light of these recent positive developments the European Union :

- encourages the ongoing efforts of the UN Secretary-General to find a solution to the problem of East Timor;
- stresses the need for a fair, free and comprehensive consultation by the UN of the East Timorese;
- expresses its willingness to support the organisation of such a consultation.

At the same time, the European Union encourages Indonesia to further reduce the level of military presence in East Timor and expresses concern about the arming of civil militias, which may jeopardise the opportunity for finding a peaceful solution.

The European Union remains greatly concerned at the increased tension and violence in East Timor. The European Union calls on all sides to show restraint. It also calls for the disarmament and disbandment of militias. Furthermore, the European Union supports the urgent establishment of a UN presence in East Timor which would contribute to decrease the currently high level of tension.

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