

**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  
on the presidential elections in Kazakhstan**

The European Union follows very closely the process of democratisation in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The presidential elections of 10 January 1999 were of particular importance in this context.

In their declarations of 5 November 1998 and 17 December 1998, the Presidency of the European Union called upon Kazakhstan to take all appropriate measures to guarantee a free and fair election campaign as well as an open, free and fair voting procedure. It was in particular pointed out that the European Union Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Kazakhstan, which is due to come into effect in early 1999, includes the respect of OSCE norms and commitments. These specify that elections should be free and fair.

The European Union is concerned by the conditions under which the presidential election in Kazakhstan was held, as described in the preliminary statement by the OSCE/ODIHR Election Assessment Mission of 11 January 1999. It concurs with the OSCE that the conduct of the election did not meet OSCE standards. The election date was advanced at short notice, giving candidates little time to organise their campaigns. An electoral decree in contradiction with Kazakhstan's own Constitution was used to eliminate candidates convicted for minor and arbitrarily defined offenses. Candidates received unequal access to the media.

The European Union regrets the setback that the conduct of the election has inflicted on the process of democratisation and the development of the rule of law in Kazakhstan. It calls on the Government of Kazakhstan to honour Kazakhstan's commitments to democratisation and the development of the rule of law in the framework of the OSCE and under its Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the European Union. It takes note of the steps recently announced by the President of Kazakhstan to promote the democratisation process. It expresses the hope that free and fair local and parliamentary elections will take place later this year.

5346/99 (Presse 13 - G)

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**The European Union reaffirms its readiness to assist Kazakhstan in the development of democratic institutions and the rule of law.**

**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.**

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