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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on the Conclusion of the Inter-Congolese Negotiations in Pretoria**

The European Union congratulates all the Congolese parties on the conclusion of a global and inclusive agreement on transition in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in Pretoria on 13 December 2002.

The European Union expresses its high appreciation of the concerted mediation efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr Moustapha Niasse and the delegation of the South African Government. It also expresses its gratitude for the personal involvement of President Thabo Mbeki.

The European Union considers this agreement a major breakthrough for the restoration of lasting peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in the whole Great Lakes region. The remaining issues should be dealt with quickly and in the same constructive spirit that led to the overall agreement. It invites the signatory parties to implement in good faith the provisions of this agreement and to work together for the formation of an all-inclusive Transitional National Government responsible for leading the Democratic Republic of Congo until the first democratic elections.

The European Union urges all armed groups, which are continuing hostilities on the ground, to cease immediately all military activity, especially in the Eastern provinces and in Ituri and to join in efforts towards the pacification, unification and reconstruction of the country.

The European Union calls on all countries in the region to cooperate with the transitional government with a view to facilitating the implementation of the agreement in Pretoria.

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The European Union stands ready to accompany the implementation of the agreement, in particular by implementing a substantial programme to assist the future Congolese government of transition with a view to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the country. It is also committing substantial humanitarian assistance to meet the urgent needs of the population, which has suffered severely during the long years of war.

The European Union renews its support for the initiative of the United Nations and the African Union to convene, as soon as conditions allow, an international conference on democracy, peace and stability and development in the Great Lakes region.

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.
