

Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union concerning Sri Lanka

The European Union stresses the importance of the meeting held on 1 November 2000 between Mr Eric Solheim and Mr Velupillai Prabhakaran, leader of the LTTE, the first such meeting since Norway took on the role of "facilitator" in the dialogue between the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE in February 2000. In this connection, the European Union reiterates its support for the Norwegian initiative.

The European Union would urge the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE to take the opportunity offered today of a dialogue which could bring about a negotiated solution and put an end to an ethnic conflict which has been the cause of much suffering for the Sri Lankan people for nearly twenty years.

The European Union is strongly in favour of these negotiations, which must take substantial account of the aspirations of the Tamil minority while respecting the cultural and religious diversity of Sri Lanka and not undermining the inalienable principle of the territorial integrity and unity of the country.

The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union, the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this declaration.