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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on the situation in the Pool region of the Republic of the Congo**

The European Union is extremely concerned at the ongoing confrontations, since March 2002, between groups of armed rebels and the Congolese armed forces in the Pool region of the Republic of the Congo.

The EU is concerned that this drawn-out crisis is creating an increasingly serious humanitarian and security situation.

The European Union condemns the atrocities committed against the local population. It calls on the Congolese authorities to allow humanitarian agencies access to the areas affected as a matter of urgency.

The European Union notes with interest the recent initiatives taken in cooperation with key players in the Pool region, which are likely to facilitate settlement of the crisis by means of dialogue. The EU is anxious that all parties should work towards that end.

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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