



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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P 123/04

**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on the elections in Kosovo**

The European Union welcomes the orderly and peaceful manner in which the Kosovo elections were held on 23 October 2004. These elections, that were for the first time to a large extent organized by the Kosovars themselves, provided an opportunity for all people from Kosovo to express their democratic right to choose their representatives in a new Assembly. The European Union fully associates itself with the preliminary statement made by the Council of Europe Election Observation Mission on the elections. The observations of the Council of Europe concur with the findings of the observation visits of the Liaison Offices of the European Union in Kosovo.

The European Union welcomes in particular the preliminary assessment by the Council of Europe Election Observation Mission that the elections were conducted in accordance with a legal framework that provided the conditions for free and fair elections, and that they took place in a peaceful atmosphere. Furthermore, the European Union commends the transparent and professional way in which the Central Election Commission and its Secretariat operated.

P R E S S

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13955/04 (Presse 305)

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The European Union welcomes the broad participation of political parties and civil initiatives in the elections. At the same time, the European Union expresses its disappointment about the low participation of the Kosovo-Serb community. It is important that the Kosovo Serb community participates fully in the political life in Kosovo. To do so is in their own best interest. The European Union also calls on the authorities in Belgrade to play a constructive role in Kosovo.

The European Union encourages all elected political parties and civil initiatives to proceed rapidly towards constituting the new Assembly and a new government. A new, stable and reform-oriented government which works hard to gain the confidence of all ethnic groups in Kosovo should be formed as soon as possible.

The newly elected Provisional Institutions for Self-Government will have a crucial role in pressing ahead with much needed reforms to help build a better future for all in a democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo.

The European Union wishes to stress the important task of a new government to complete the reconstruction of private homes, damaged in the March 17 riots, before this winter. Furthermore, the European Union expects a new government to focus on the continued implementation of the Standards for Kosovo, in particular with regard to the return of internally displaced persons and refugees, the reform of local self-government, the integration of minorities and their security, as well as economic development and the rule of law.

The Candidate Countries Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this declaration.

* Croatia continues to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.