



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on release of the opposition leader in Maldives**

The European Union welcomes the release from house arrest on 21 September of the leader of the Maldivian Democratic Party, Mohamed Nasheed, who was arrested in August 2005 during a peaceful protest and subsequently charged with sedition and terrorism. The EU notes that the charges remain in force but looks forward to them being dropped in the near future.

The European Union also welcomes the recent pardon and release of Jennifer Latheef, daughter of MDP spokesman Mohamed Latheef, sentenced to ten years' imprisonment in October 2005 on terrorism charges.

The European Union is greatly encouraged by the informal talks that the Government of Maldives and the main opposition party, the MDP, have undertaken. The European Union welcomes the commitment shown by both parties to establishing a lasting, liberal democratic system for all the people of the Maldives.

P R E S S

The European Union looks to all parties to work constructively in order to enhance the democratic reform process and guarantee a democratic, free and fair elections as soon as possible.

The European Union also welcomes the accession of the Maldives to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Optional Protocol to International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

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

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.