



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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

The European Union takes note of the parliamentary elections held in Zimbabwe on 31 March 2005. The European Union notes that it was not invited to observe the elections.

The European Union has duly noted Zimbabwe's commitment to complying with the SADC principles and guidelines governing democratic elections, as well as SADC's engagement in this context.

There were some improvements in the conduct of the elections compared with previous polls, and Zimbabwe has made some technical adjustments to the electoral framework in order to observe SADC's principles and guidelines.

However, the European Union is concerned by a number of serious shortcomings found in the Zimbabwean electoral system. It also expresses reservations about the environment in which the voting took place. These are in addition to more general and more worrying findings concerning the human rights situation.

P R E S S

This assessment and an examination of the application of international electoral practices and standards do not allow the European Union to conclude that the elections were free and fair.

The restoration of democracy and the rule of law, respect for human rights and the adoption of measures to deal with the urgent humanitarian needs of the population thus continue to be fundamental requirements in Zimbabwe.

The Accessing Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey and Croatia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, 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.
