



EUROPEAN UNION



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PRESSE 29

Declaration by the High Representative Catherine Ashton on behalf of the European Union on Zimbabwe

Today the EU decided to remove 35 people from the visa ban and asset freeze list and to extend the validity of the remaining measures currently applying to Zimbabwe. These decisions are taken as a result of the annual review the EU has undertaken of its policy towards Zimbabwe and an in-depth assessment of the current economic, social and political situation in the country.

During the review the EU took note of the significant progress made in addressing the economic crisis and in improving the delivery of basic social services. The EU has actively supported this process and remains the largest provider of assistance. Since the establishment of the Government of National Unity € 365 million has been spent in support of the social sectors, food security and the promotion of governance.

However, economic and social developments have not been matched by equivalent progress on the political front. Further reforms are necessary with regard to the respect for rule of law, human rights and democracy which are essential in order to create an environment conducive to the holding of credible elections. In this context, I have to express my deep concerns at the upsurge in political violence seen in recent weeks.

The EU reaffirms its continued willingness to work closely with the Government of National Unity in addressing the challenges the country faces. We look forward to the regular and timely continuation of our comprehensive political dialogue.

The EU has concluded that there has not yet been sufficient progress to justify a more substantial change of its policy towards Zimbabwe. We have therefore decided to extend by a period of one year the measures, consisting of (i) a visa ban and asset freeze relating to a list of named individuals and businesses; (ii) an arms embargo and (iii) other measures, taken within the context of Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement.

P R E S S

Following an examination of the names on the travel ban and asset freeze list, we have concluded that the 35 persons referred to above can be removed from the list with immediate effect. The remaining 163 people and 31 businesses are still considered to be linked to human rights' abuses, the undermining of democracy or the abuse of the rule of law.

I would like to emphasise that the EU remains willing to amend its decision at any time within the next twelve months should further, concrete developments take place. In particular, I consider a common understanding between the parties in Government on the necessary steps to be taken in the run up to elections to be critically important for the democratic process in the country.

I welcome the increased regional diplomatic efforts and support SADC and its Member States in their work to facilitate an agreement on a road map to democratic and peaceful elections.
