

Brussels, 12 December 2002

**EU-Presidency and Commission Joint Press Release
on the opening of the negotiations with Iran**

The first round of negotiations between the EU and Iran on a trade and cooperation agreement and political dialogue and cooperation against terrorism took place in Brussels on 12 December 2002. The Presidency was represented by Mr Peter Lysholt Hansen, Under Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, and the Commission by Mr Christian Leffler, Director in the European Commission. The Iranian delegation was led by Mr Shamseddin Khareghani, Director General for Western Europe, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Mr Kia Tabatabaai, Director General for Multilateral Economic Cooperation, MFA.

The negotiations took place in a friendly atmosphere with a common desire to strengthen dialogue and cooperation. A frank and open exchange of views took place, and the parties agreed to continue negotiations on a trade and cooperation agreement and on political cooperation and fight against terrorism. The EU noted the invitation from the Iranian side to conduct the next round of negotiations in Tehran in early spring 2003.

The EU expressed its expectation that the negotiations and conclusion of the agreement will help develop economic exchanges and cooperation with Iran, and contribute to the continuation of the process of political and economic reform. The EU expects that the deepening of economic and commercial relations between the EU and Iran will be matched by similar progress in the areas of political dialogue and counter-terrorism. These are interdependent, indissociable and mutually reinforcing elements of the global approach which is the basis for progress in EU-Iran relations. The negotiations which were launched on the 12 December will be an important step in a qualitative improvement of EU-Iran relations.
