



Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe
Union des Confédérations de l'Industrie et des Employeurs d'Europe

Friday 5 June 1998

**GEORGES JACOBS ELECTED NEW PRESIDENT OF UNICE;
EUROPEAN BUSINESS SENDS CLEAR MESSAGE TO CARDIFF SUMMIT
ON NECESSARY STRUCTURAL REFORMS**

The Presidents of UNICE's 33 member federations met today in London to **elect Baron Georges Jacobs as President of UNICE**, succeeding Mr François Perigot, whose mandate ended today. Georges Jacobs is a well-known and respected figure both in the business world and amongst the federations. He is currently President of the Executive Committee of UCB Group and Honorary President of the Fédération des Entreprises Belges (the Belgian business federation). He is a past Vice President of UNICE and the Chairman of UNICE's "Competitiveness" working group, where he oversaw the publication of the UNICE report "Benchmarking Europe's Competitiveness – from analysis to action" (Feb. 1998).

In their message to the European Council in Cardiff on 15-16 June, the Council of Presidents called on the Heads of State and Government to **continue the process of budgetary convergence and to implement the structural and economic reforms necessary for improving the employment situation**. "Shortsighted initiatives, especially in the areas of tax or social policy, will only endanger the recent progress made in improving the competitive situation in Europe – we should use the current favourable economic climate as the basis for strengthening the foundations of a more competitive Europe", said the outgoing UNICE President, François Perigot.

Other key areas for strong action highlighted by the Council of Presidents include:

- ✧ continued recognition of the principle of subsidiarity, especially in employment policy which is primarily of national competence;
- ✧ Member States committing themselves to the deepening and widening of the European Union, and therefore, to ensure its success, the strengthening of the competitive position of European companies;
- ✧ completion of the Single Market by the target date of 1 January 1999, as the creation of the Euro on that date will reinforce the need for a well-functioning single market;
- ✧ improvement of the regulatory environment, especially for small and medium-sized companies.

On behalf of the millions of companies of all sizes that they represent, and which will be the first to be affected by the 'Millenium Bug', the Presidents of UNICE's member

federations urge the highest authorities of the Union to promote resolution of this problem, using awareness campaigns to ensure the widest possible preparation of all actors concerned.

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