

Brussels, 11 May 2000

**UNICE EURO-MED INITIATIVE:
BETTER LINKS WITH BUSINESS**

On 12 and 13 May, the UNIMED Business Network will officially be launched during the IV Euro-Mediterranean Industrial Summit in Tunis, organised by UTICA together with UNICE with the support of the European Commission. Its aim is to reinforce the employer organisations of Southern Mediterranean Countries (SMC).

With a total budget of EUR 3.4 million over 3 years, UNIMED is a programme co-financed by the European Commission for EUR 2.5 million. The programme is divided into three components:

- Training and support for the development of employer organisations
- Information and networking of Euro-Mediterranean employer organisations
- Multilateral rapprochement of South Mediterranean Countries' employer organisations.

UNICE's Honorary President and Special Representative for the Mediterranean, François Perigot declared that: "this is a very ambitious programme. It is our way to contribute to the creation of an Euro-Mediterranean Free-Trade Area. Our duty is to help South Mediterranean federations to adapt to the new economic environment". This will be done with the transfer of know-how through training seminars, missions of European federations experts, internships in UNICE EU member federations and networking of all participants.

UNICE attaches great importance to the success of this programme. This will only be achieved with the collaboration and active participation of the greatest number of federations. Strengthened cooperation between SMC federations themselves is also key to regional economic integration between their respective countries. Integration "is essential for fostering sustainable economic development in the region and for the establishment of the Euro-Mediterranean Free-Trade Area", declared Honorary President Perigot. Without more integrated markets, investments will be limited in the region and integration between Northern and Southern shores of the Mediterranean basin will not be achieved easily.

