

Brussels, 7 November 2000

**UNICE CALLS FOR CREATION OF A SINGLE EUROPEAN
CUSTOMS AUTHORITY TO STOP FRAUD IN TRANSIT**

In a keynote speech at the Transit Action Group conference today, Mr Dirk Hudig, Secretary General of UNICE, called for the creation of a **single European Customs Authority** in order to end transit fraud in Europe.

For UNICE, completion of every aspect of the internal market and trade development are top priorities. The Community transit procedure is an extension of this and a vital element for corporate competitiveness. European companies need an efficient and flexible transit system which enables them to forward goods rapidly and reliably across Europe. Therefore, UNICE welcomes the new transit reform as approved on 20 September as well as the New Computerised Transit System which will be fully operational next year.

Mr Hudig underlined the need for the 15 different customs administrations “to think and act as one. The growth of trade flows is an additional reason why there is a need for effective systems to control goods, as it is less and less possible to intervene physically. As the proposal to establish a European Public Prosecutor for fighting crimes against EU financial interests has now been tabled, the same institutional improvement should be sought on the side of facilitation with the creation of a single European Customs Authority. Only such an authority could effectively modernise Member States’ Customs Administrations and avoid the grant of simplifications being conditional on customs controls capacity”, said UNICE’s Secretary General.

In preparation for the enlargement process, UNICE urges the Commission and the Member States to elaborate together with business a pan-European strategy for customs facilitation in trade in goods.

Furthermore, UNICE supports a strong improvement of the administrative management of the transit regime, developing towards a real ‘one-stop-shop’ system. Mr Hudig stated that “small and medium-sized companies should have the same fair access to simplified procedures as major corporations”.