

Brussels, 15 November 2000

**Euro-Mediterranean:
Companies one step ahead in Barcelona process**

The actors of the Barcelona process have given their assessment of five years of cooperation between the European Union and the Mediterranean partner countries. The picture to date is disappointing. Statements of intent go well beyond what has been achieved. Yet, we are already one third of the way into the timetable of process, which is due to be completed in 2010. The aim is to create a free-trade area which can only benefit all if the Mediterranean partner countries carry out reforms, with the support of the European Union, to rebalance their economies, to become more competitive and to guarantee the necessary social cohesion.

Companies, which are vectors of investment, growth, jobs and competitiveness, must be at the centre of this historic project. Business on both shores of the Mediterranean is ready to meet this challenge, which they identified long before the launch of the Barcelona process in the framework of a series of Euro-Mediterranean meetings which they organised spontaneously among themselves.

To pursue this dialogue, the UNIMED Business Network¹ has been created. This network is a force for policy proposals and actions to help employer organisations to create a framework for the implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean free-trade area.

Meeting in Aix-en-Provence on 10 November for a high-level UNIMED Business Network seminar, the Euro-Mediterranean private sector emphasised two absolute conditions for the success of the Barcelona process: ***visible political commitment by states and direct involvement of economic players in the design of new initiatives.***

¹ The UNIMED Business Network project, co-financed by the European Commission and managed by UNICE, seeks to strengthen employer organisations in Mediterranean partner countries and their cooperation with their sister organisations in the European Union. One of the objectives in view is the creation of an umbrella organisation which would bring together all of the South-Mediterranean federations and would become one of the engines for South-Mediterranean integration.

✍ **Visible political commitment:** companies want Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Affairs Ministers to define a clear action programme with a realistic timetable to create the free-trade area. They also underline the need to gain the support of companies and for a genuine effort to inform public opinion as well as all the other parties concerned by this process.

✍ **Direct involvement of the enterprise:** companies are the key to economic growth and jobs. It is essential to involve them and the rest of the civil society in the design, definition and implementation of the actions needed for creation of genuine and balanced Euro-Mediterranean partnership, as desired by all.

Attachment: Statement by Euro-Mediterranean business in view of the 4th Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference in Marseille on 15 and 16 November 2000. (the full text of the declaration can be downloaded from our Website)

For more information, please contact Unimed:

Mr Paolo Nicoletti
Website:

+32(0)2.237.65.72
www.unice.org