

**Barcelona process: UNICE and UMCE join forces**

**Valencia, 22 April 2002** – On the occasion of the fifth Euro-Mediterranean Conference (Barcelona V), UMCE and UNICE, the voices of South-Mediterranean and European business respectively, today presented to the Spanish Foreign Affairs Minister and the current President of the Council of the European Union, Mr Josep Piqué, the joint recommendations of Euro-Mediterranean business for relaunch of the Barcelona process. These were defined at the 5th Euro-Mediterranean Business Summit held in Istanbul on 1 and 2 March 2002.

Mr François Perigot, Honorary President of UNICE and its Special Representative for the Mediterranean, said: “The results obtained to date are too limited. The objective of a Euro-Mediterranean free-trade area will not be possible without a demonstration of strong determination by the governments concerned. Clear and specific commitments need to be made in Valencia”.

For his part, the President of UMCE, Mr Chami, President of the Moroccan employers’ organisation, underlined the important role that companies play as actors in the economic and social transformations required to establish and make a success of the free-trade area. In this context, he explained that “UMCE members are prepared to play their role to the full, vis-à-vis both companies and their respective administrations”. The two Presidents stressed the importance of strengthening South-South trade significantly and as rapidly as possible, an absolute condition for economic integration between the South and North shores of the Mediterranean.

Today’s meeting follows on from those held on 19 March in Toledo with trade ministers and on 10 April in Málaga with industry ministers.

UNICE, the Union of Industrial and Employers’ Confederations of Europe, is the voice of European business. It brings together 34 industrial and employers’ organisations from 27 countries.

UMCE, the Union of Mediterranean Confederations of Enterprises created on 1 March 2002, is the organisation which brings together the main horizontal business organisations of the twelve partner Mediterranean countries<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> UMCE was created in the framework of the UNIMED Business Network project, managed by UNICE and co-financed by the MEDA programme, whose mission is to strengthen employer organisations in partner Mediterranean countries and network them with their counterparts in the European Union.