

Brussels, 6 February 2003

CONVENTION ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE
ADDRESS BY GEORGES JACOBS
PRESIDENT OF UNICE

President,
Colleagues,

In its contributions to the working group on social Europe, UNICE has constantly underlined that economic and social progress can only go hand-in-hand. The promotion of competitiveness will also need to be included in article 3 of the constitutional treaty.

Mr Katiforis deserve praise for his work but the task of those who will have to translate the recommendations of working group XI into short and sharp Constitutional treaty language will not be easy.

Since the group did not have the opportunity to formally approve the final version presented today, I would like to make 5 remarks

1. On the objectives: The group was unanimous in wishing to have a short and concise article. Two things could help in this respect:

- avoiding repetitions of certain notions in the articles on values and objectives (as is the case for “social justice”);
 - deleting the reference to “social market economy” on which there was no consensus in the group.
2. On the competences: we fully agree that existing competences in the social field are adequate but we are not in favour of re-drafting article 16 on services of general interests.
 3. On the open method of coordination: we agree that including a reference to the open method of coordination in the Treaty could be helpful provided that the flexibility of the method (which is applied differently depending on the policy concerned) is preserved.
 4. On qualified majority vote: we believe that the areas, such as social security, which remain subject to unanimity vote in article 137 deserve to be treated as exceptions to the general rule of decisions by QMV (due to national specificities). We are not in favour of going beyond the compromise reached in Nice. By contrast, article 42 (on the coordination of social security to ensure the free movement of people) should be decided by QMV and not by unanimity.
 5. On the role of the social partners: We welcome the fact that the report of the working group clearly recognises the specific role of the social partners. Our role is different from organisations representing civil society, which are represented in the European Social Committee. In a joint contribution of UNICE,

UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC, we made specific proposals on how recognise the role of the social partners in part 1 of the Constitutional Treaty. We also asked that the social partners' role be acknowledged in relevant chapters of part 2 of the Constitutional treaty. As far as the social chapter is concerned, the wording of the report is ambiguous. Our request is to integrate both articles 138 and 139 as they stand. Last but not least, the role of social partners at EU level cannot be limited to negotiating agreements. The Laeken European Council agreed that Social summits would take place ahead of the Spring European Council to take stock of the implementation of the Lisbon strategy and the Commission recently made a proposal for a decision on a Tripartite Social Summit, which the social partners support. An explicit reference to this should be made in the new Treaty.

Thank you for your attention.