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UNICE calls on ETUC to support necessary structural reforms

On the occasion of the 10th Congress of the European Trade Unions Congress (ETUC), UNICE called on trade union leaders and delegates to support necessary structural reforms to meet Europe's economic and social challenges.

In his speech in Prague today, the President of UNICE, Georges Jacobs, highlighted the importance of bringing UNICE's and ETUC's vision of Europe closer together.

"The slowdown in economic growth in Europe cannot be attributed only to the international situation. Actions are needed to address structural weaknesses in the European economy.", recalled President Jacobs.

Commenting on the Lisbon strategy, he stressed that it offered the right framework to improve our competitiveness but expressed UNICE's concerns about the delays in its implementation and disappointment with the weakness of recommendations to encourage entrepreneurship and employment creation in the new guidelines for employment.

"There is strong resistance to reform in big European countries, translating into a perpetuation of structural deficits. Postponing adjustment makes it more costly, reduces margins of manoeuvre, undermines confidence and damages employment. Trade unions must face their responsibilities and take a positive attitude to change", said President Jacobs.

Recalling the achievements of the social dialogue since its beginning in the mid 1980s, Georges Jacobs thanked the ETUC departing managing team Fritz Verzetnisch, Emilio Gabaglio and Jean Lapeyre and welcomed the new leaders of ETUC.

The social partners have taken some 40 joint initiatives since 1986, including four framework agreements on parental leave, part-time, fixed-term work contracts and telework. Their work programme for 2003-2005 foresees discussions on some 19 themes of common interest to employers and workers.

The speech by Mr Jacobs is available on UNICE's website.

Note to the Editor

UNICE represents more than 16 million small, medium and large companies active in Europe, employing over 106 million people. Active in European affairs since 1958, UNICE's members are 35 central industrial and employers federations from 28 countries, working together to achieve growth and competitiveness in Europe.

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