

Brussels, 15 July 2003

**ITALIAN PRESIDENCY NEEDS TO INJECT MORE DYNAMISM AND FLEXIBILITY
INTO THE EUROPEAN ECONOMY
- UNICE MEETS PRIME MINISTER SILVIO BERLUSCONI -**

Stimulating growth by implementing necessary structural reforms in Europe, making a success of the WTO negotiations in Cancun and better transatlantic relations were the core messages UNICE conveyed to Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi today. At a meeting in Rome, a UNICE delegation headed by UNICE President Dr Jürgen Strube and Antonio D'Amato, President of Confindustria, the Italian industry and employers' association, discussed with Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi the requests of European business for the Italian Presidency of the EU. UNICE also asked the Italian Presidency not to unpick the final result of the Convention in the upcoming Intergovernmental Conference.

In the current fragile economic situation, only through implementation of structural reforms will more dynamism and flexibility be injected into the European economy. The current structural shortcomings are paralysing business activity and harming the competitiveness of Europe. UNICE recalled implementation of the Lisbon strategy, where the Italian Presidency can play a key role by communicating this vision of a prosperous and competitive Europe to citizens. Business welcomes the great emphasis the Italian Presidency has placed on growth and, in particular, on implementation of the trans-European network. UNICE also underlined the importance of the industrial sector and the need to promote its competitiveness. The Competitiveness Council is urged to play a decisive role by making sure that the competitiveness angle of draft European legislation is properly addressed.

"The competitiveness of Europe must be restored", said Dr Strube President of UNICE. "The Italian Presidency is very committed to creating an environment that is enterprise-friendly, deregulated and simple. The result would be that Europe is once again more attractive for investors and researchers".

Confindustria President D'Amato stressed: *"Europe's economy is not growing. The key issue for Europe in the years ahead should be to carry out structural reforms and to emphasise investments in infrastructure and research".*

It is important to improve transatlantic relations. Good transatlantic relations are vital for European business. Confidence and partnership traditionally exist with our American partners. EU and US administrations must dialogue in order to obtain satisfactory results on multilateral issues such as the trade negotiations in Cancun. Progress on the Doha Development agenda at Cancun in September will bring down protectionist measures, open new markets for European companies and improve the conditions in which they operate worldwide.

With regard to the upcoming Intergovernmental Conference, starting in October, President Strube asked for the final text submitted by the Convention not to be unravelled. Although the text could still be improved from a business viewpoint, it finally represents a satisfactory balance between economic and social aspects.

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.