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REACH: SERIOUS CONCERNS ABOUT INADEQUATE CONSULTATION OF DOWNSTREAM USERS

UNICE regrets that the Commission has today adopted the proposal for a Regulation concerning the Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals (REACH) without going through all the necessary preparatory steps. Two essential conditions for achieving efficient regulation have still not been fulfilled: REACH lacks both a comprehensive impact assessment and a proper dialogue with sectors using chemicals.

"As explained in several letters to the Commission, the inadequate consultation of downstream users has to be rectified as rapidly as possible" says Dr Jürgen Strube, President of UNICE. "The fact that the total cost of REACH as estimated by the Commission is around eight to twelve times lower than that estimated by other studies shows clearly that the Commission's economic evaluation methods have to be examined in close detail" adds Dr Strube.

A thorough analysis of the economic impacts on user sectors is essential to understand and measure the consequences of REACH for industry and related services as a whole, so that informed and responsible policy development can take place.

In particular, UNICE is deeply concerned that: first, the current REACH system will make the business environment less supportive for innovation, by impacting negatively on the flexibility of the production system, and by putting confidentiality aspects at risk. Second, the problems of lack of consistency between existing EU legislation and REACH have not been sufficiently addressed.

UNICE is pleased to note that the Commission has accompanied adoption of REACH with a decision to engage in closer consultation with industry, in particular with downstream users. UNICE will participate actively in this consultation provided that the results of its work are taken into account.

"I am concerned that, despite numerous UNICE requests, these issues have not been discussed enough between the Commission and the business community, leading the Commission to present a very incomplete impact assessment, which fails to match the quality commitments it made in the Better Regulation initiative, the importance of which was reconfirmed by the European Summit on 17 October 2003" says Dr Jürgen Strube.

UNICE expects the Competitiveness Council to have the leading role in development of the chemicals legislative package.

Note to the editor:

UNICE is the official voice of more than 16 million small, medium and large companies in Europe. 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.