

## PRESS RELEASE

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### MORE INVESTMENTS FOR BETTER EURO-MED INTEGRATION

**On the occasion of the VI<sup>th</sup> Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference, which is to be held in Naples on 2 and 3 December, UNICE and UMCE jointly reaffirm their attachment to the Barcelona process. On the economic level, the Euro-Mediterranean business community calls for emphasis to be placed on strengthening the private sector and promoting investments in Mediterranean partner countries (MPCs). Europe and MPCs have a common interest in stronger economic integration between the two shores of the Mediterranean.**

The Naples conference is the opportunity to take stock of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the progress it has made and its challenges. In the economic area, the weakness continues to be the level of investments in MPCs. Only around 1.5% of European investments go to MPCs, a much lower level than goes to other developing regions of the world. Yet, the needs of the partner countries are immense: at least 34 million new jobs need to be created, many of them by 2010, simply to stabilise the unemployment rate.

In this context, Mr François Perigot, Honorary President of UNICE and its Special Representative for the Mediterranean, said that *“investment promotion remains a sine qua non for development of the Mediterranean partner countries”*. For the President of UMCE, Mr Hassan Chami, this *“requires establishment of a successful free-trade area which can be realised only through deep economic and social reforms”*.

Specifically, UNICE and UMCE recommend:

1. accelerate the process of liberalising trade in goods and services, north-south and south-south, by forcefully reaffirming the objective of a Euro-Mediterranean free-trade area before 2010;
2. draw up a Euro-Mediterranean action plan for trade facilitation, with specific objectives for the time limits for customs clearance of goods;
3. define and implement an action plan for transport, which would strengthen the capacity of infrastructures and put in place interconnections with the EU;
4. envisage revision of the MEDA programme in order to reorient this instrument partially towards the private sector and investment promotion, and guarantee that EIB resources are committed for these same objectives;
5. explore the instrument of mutual recognition of qualifications which would facilitate labour mobility in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

#### Note to the editor

**UNICE** AISBL 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.

**UMCE** (Union of Mediterranean Confederations of Enterprises), established on 1 March 2002, is the association which brings together the main horizontal business organisations in the twelve Mediterranean partner countries, created as part of the UNICE project UNIMED Business Network.

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