

Presidents of the Mercosur countries

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

8 April 2004

THE PRESIDENT

Dear President

UNICE, the voice of more than 16 million European companies, strongly supports the EU-Mercosur negotiations underway which aim at the conclusion of an Association Agreement between the two partners as soon as possible. It is convinced that the Agreement, which includes a bi-regional Free-Trade Area, will bring mutual benefits and closer cooperation in the political, economic and socio-cultural fields. Trade and investment liberalisation will make both Mercosur and the EU more competitive globally. A bi-regional agreement is in the interests of European and Mercosur business, as repeatedly expressed in the MEBF, in which UNICE participates.

Four years have passed since the beginning of the EU-Mercosur negotiations and some progress has been achieved. However, to bring the process to a successful conclusion it is absolutely imperative to ensure significant progress simultaneously in all areas of negotiations that are still open. The exchange of improved offers by mid-April is therefore crucial because it will determine whether the negotiations can be concluded this year, as agreed in the 12 November 2003 roadmap.

UNICE calls on the EU and Mercosur to find an appropriate and balanced agreement on agriculture, to deal with urgency with the remaining difficult issues on the negotiating table and to make every effort to present substantial offers by the agreed deadline. UNICE is particularly looking for improved market access for industrial goods, services, government procurement and investment. Failing such progress, we are afraid, will close the window of opportunity for quite some time. Thus, the timely conclusion of the EU-Mercosur Agreement would be at risk and subject to unforeseeable delay.

I thank you in advance for your kind consideration to UNICE's demands. You can count on UNICE's active support for all initiatives which aim to strengthen and deepen EU-Mercosur cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Jürgen Strube