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UNICE REACTION TO THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL SUMMIT**On the European Constitution:**

UNICE notes the European Council's decision to start a period of reflection and debate on the European Constitution. For the business community the constitutional treaty remains a good response for European integration and its governance needs. As requested by the UNICE Presidents in their statement before the EU Summit, it is crucial to explain to European citizens the benefits of reforms which are indispensable in order to sustain economic and social progress across Europe. Businesses are essential to the Growth and Jobs Strategy and will continue to communicate this clearly.

On the financial perspectives:

The European business community regrets that European Heads of State and Government have not been able to reach an agreement on the financial perspectives 2007-2013. Europe cannot afford any delay in the implementation of Community policies.

The financial perspectives are intended to be an instrument for implementation of the Growth and Jobs Strategy. The aim should be to give the highest priority to competitiveness-enhancing programmes, such as research, TENs, training and support to innovative SMEs. Cohesion policies and rural development should also be targeted to enhance overall competitiveness.

Philippe de Buck, UNICE Secretary General, commented on the failure to achieve an agreement: *“European citizens have expressed strong concerns regarding poor job creation and high unemployment. The current negotiations on the financial perspectives constituted an important credibility test for our policy-makers to demonstrate how serious they are about these concerns. Unfortunately Heads of State and Government have not so far produced evidence of this. Now, negotiations have to be pursued as a matter of urgency under the UK Presidency”.*

Note to the editor:

UNICE is the voice of more than 20 million small, medium and large companies. Active in European affairs since 1958, UNICE's members are 38 central industrial and employers federations from 32 countries, working together to achieve growth and competitiveness in Europe.

For further information, please contact:

Maria Fernanda Fau:
Website:

+32 (0) 2 237.65.62
www.unice.org