

**6TH EU-INDIA BUSINESS SUMMIT
7 SEPTEMBER 2005
OPENING SESSION**

**INTERVENTION BY MR PHILIPPE DE BUCK
UNICE'S SECRETARY GENERAL**

Minister Nath,
Commissioner Mandelson,
Secretary of State,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

- I am very pleased to be with you here today in this 6th EU-India Business Summit in front of such a distinguished audience.
- During the whole day, EU and Indian business representatives will have the opportunity to discuss issues of interest for companies, shared challenges and how to pursue our action towards a reinforced bilateral relationship. This is part of a process of EU-India Business Summits, which UNICE has supported since its inception.
- All this has been possible due to the good organisation by our Indian hosts, whom I warmly thank. I would also like to thank the Indian and UK Governments, CBI and the European Commission for their support for this event.
- I would like to briefly present you some reflections on EU-India relations and what business can do to strengthen them.
- First, our bilateral relations are very important for the EU and Indian business communities. **India and the EU are major partners** for each other, politically and economically. India's growing importance as a global player is well recognised.

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 39 central industrial and employers federations from 33 countries, working together to achieve growth and competitiveness in Europe.

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- Second, the EU and India already have a mutually beneficial economic partnership. The EU is India's main partner in trade, investment, and cooperation aid. There is, however, **scope for huge expansion** and for a reinforced partnership. To put that in perspective, the total volume of bilateral trade puts India in the same group as countries with smaller economies such as Singapore or Romania.
- Third, the EU and India **should explore all opportunities to strengthen cooperation** at all levels, government, business and civil society, to improve mutual understanding and to make our economies more competitive and dynamic. For its part, UNICE, as well as most of its members, like CBI, is working closely with the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII), and with FICCI in this direction, and are committed to continue doing so. Business organisations are playing an increasing role supporting countries in strengthening international relations.
- The **EU-India Joint Action Plan**, to be adopted today in the political Summit, marks a new milestone in our relationship. As business representatives, we would like to see this Action Plan rapidly implemented, ensuring concrete progress. An area of particular interest is investment where, despite progress, India only receives 0.3% of the EU's FDI outflows. Stable and open investment markets are beneficial for both developed and developing countries in terms of growth. According to the World Bank report "*Doing business in 2005 - Removing obstacles to growth*" heavy regulatory burdens, difficulties starting up businesses and weak protection for investors seriously hamper growth and development.
- Fourth, a key challenge is how to develop cooperation on **global issues**. India and the EU have to match its economic and political weight by taking further leadership and engagement in multilateral negotiations. We can do a lot together based on our shared values and interests by bringing positions closer ahead of important international meetings.
- Fifth, cooperation is of particular importance in **WTO negotiations**, to help countries focus on pro-competitive reforms and progressively open their markets to competition for the benefit of all – companies, consumers and governments. UNICE is working together with Indian and other business communities to present a global business declaration for Hong Kong. The objective is to stress strong support for the DDA and multilateral trade liberalisation, to oppose protectionism and to support significant progress in all areas of the DDA negotiations. The global business declaration should express support for new market access with appropriate flexibility for the poorest countries.
- With those objectives, we call on you to **make every effort towards improving cooperation** on multilateral trade and investment issues, as the basis for future growth and prosperity. The specific interests of developing countries should be taken into account, but recognising the level of development and international competitiveness of specific sectors in these countries.

- Minister, Commissioner, Mr Johnson, Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you very much for your attention. UNICE is counting on you to promote the interests of European and Indian companies and taking the action necessary to foster their competitiveness.

Thank you for your attention.
