

European Business Backs Commissioner Mandelson

Hong Kong, 16 December 2005

UNICE, the voice of business in Europe, and the European Services Forum urge Commissioner Mandelson not to back down but to insist that all WTO Members - other than least developed countries (LDCs) - make substantial offers. The Hong Kong Ministerial will only be successfully concluded if all issues on the negotiating table are addressed.

We are concerned that the negotiations are focusing on specific areas in agriculture, in particular export subsidies.

We have come to Hong Kong with the expectation of a give and take and not with a view of putting the EU into a corner. We feel that the emerging countries of the WTO, in particular India and Brazil, have a responsibility to commit to ambitious market opening for goods and services.

We are extremely concerned about the backtracking in these two areas and we consider that both items are integral parts of the DDA negotiations.

Much more could also be done by the US and Japan to grant market access to the LDCs.

Only if these issues are addressed, we would expect further movement from the EU in Hong Kong.

Note to the editor:

UNICE:

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.

European Services Forum:

The European Services Forum (ESF) is a network of representatives from the European services sector. We are committed to actively promoting the interests of the European services sector and the liberalisation of services markets throughout the world in connection with the GATS 2000 negotiations.