



23 January 2007

FROM UNICE TO BUSINESSEUROPE

ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT ERNEST-ANTOINE SEILLIÈRE CONCERT NOBLE, BRUSSELS

President of the European Parliament, Ambassadors, Members of the European Parliament, Commissioners, Presidents of national business federations, entrepreneurs, media representatives, ladies and gentlemen:

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you here this evening and to offer you my best wishes for 2007, the year in which the European Union celebrates its fiftieth anniversary, and to tell you about developments within UNICE which, as you know, brings together 39 business federations from 33 countries, representing 20 million European companies.

On their behalf, I would like to pay a solemn tribute to all those who have initiated, supported, developed and moved the European project forward in many areas over the last fifty years. The European Union today gathers 27 countries on our continent in peace and democracy. It has put in place the internal market, the single currency and a large number of common policies. It has fostered growth, employment and living standards in our countries. As the business community, we are happy and proud to celebrate its historic achievements. The European Union plays a decisive role for our future.

We are all very much aware of the serious impasse in the European project since the start of the crisis surrounding the constitution. UNICE has worked very hard to forge a common position, shared unanimously by all its members, on the essential aspects for Europe's future.

You know our traditional role – efficient and useful if I may say so – in passing on the shared views of our member federations on all the issues dealt with by the European institutions. You know about our institutional role as a social partner. But we would now like to give greater scope to the positions of European companies on the future and the organisation of our continent.

It is in that spirit that we unanimously agreed our six strategic priorities to enable a competitive Europe to increase growth and jobs, and take its place in a globalising world.



In a nutshell, these are:

- Implement the reforms for growth and jobs
- Integrate the European market
- Govern the EU efficiently
- Fight national protectionism
- Take advantage of the opportunities of enlargement
- Reform European social systems to make them sustainable.

Let me come back to the European governance issue: All the Presidents of UNICE members support a declaration on the future of Europe, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the EU this year. We have produced this Declaration because we want to be an active part of the debate on the future of the Union. We want a reinvigorated EU, capable of swift decision action when that is required. Capable of coordinating national initiatives and disseminating best practices of one Member State to others. Ladies and gentlemen: a European Union that takes action to achieve the objectives of tomorrow!

The unanimity of our members in supporting a reinvigoration of European integration on this basis prompted our resolve to seek to give greater visibility to our organisation.

In order for it to be more easily identified and to enable our partners to understand quickly and without hesitation what we represent, our mission and our objectives, we are changing our name.

Under this new name, we will continue and augment our action – I hope for another fifty years – for a Europe which is strong, innovative, competitive and cohesive and to which companies will contribute growth, jobs, welfare and opportunities.

[President pauses – animated show]

Ladies and gentlemen, this name means what it says:

BUSINESSEUROPE

This name will be understood in all 33 countries brought together in our organisation and around the world. It indicates clearly that we act on behalf of business and that we do so in order to help build Europe. One point on which we can agree: it comprises an English word “BUSINESS”, and a French word “EUROPE”.

I wish **BUSINESSEUROPE** a propitious start and a long life, for the success of our companies and the success of Europe!

It is now my honour to ask our guest speaker to come on to the podium. He is also a committed man, to the people of Europe and its institutions: Hans-Gert Pöttering has just been elected President of the European Parliament for the second half of this legislative period. I am sure you will join me in congratulating him.
