

SPEECH BY DR JÜRGEN STRUBE, PRESIDENT OF UNICE

EP RECEPTION ON 8 OCTOBER 2003

- **President, Chairmen of the political groups and the committees, Members of the European Parliament, Observers from the accession countries and dear colleagues, it is my greatest pleasure to welcome you to this event.**
- **I would like to thank President Cox especially for coming and Professor Pöttering for hosting tonight's event !**
- **UNICE, as many of you will know, is one of the oldest organisations here in Brussels and a Social Partner. We represent millions of companies, especially SMEs, who are active in Europe, and which themselves employ more than 100 million people throughout Europe.**
- **UNICE and its members thought that it is a perfect moment to get together in such a comfortable environment, since:**
 1. **I have recently taken up my new post as UNICE President and want to get to know you, the key MEPs, better**

2. Because UNICE would like to launch its new “Enterprise Brochure” today and introduce its ideas and suggestions to you, and..
 3. Because this will give us all the opportunity to discuss the many important dossiers that are currently under discussion, prior to next year’s elections.
- This Parliament in the past 4 years has achieved a lot in terms of legislation and has watched over such historic events like the introduction of the Euro and the enlargement process !
 - But it can do even better! The calls from many to have a better impact assessment of both legislation proposed and amendments tabled has a strong supporter in UNICE and we hope that the EP will push more strongly for it ! The same goes for self-regulation, which is a sign of mutual trust between politicians and industry!
 - Next year when Europeans will elect our 6th European Parliament, UNICE hopes, as President Cox expressed recently, to see for the 1st time real EUROPEAN elections and not just *national* protests, based on *national* arguments, against incumbent *national* governments!

- **Therefore, the European political parties running for the 732 seats MUST bring forward and discuss more European topics!**
- **It does take political courage to do so, but we should not underestimate our European people! They are certainly smarter than many seem to think ! The Europeans have understood that most of the problems of real concern to them have a highly visible European dimension.**
- **Recent figures, for instance, indicate that more than 80% of EU citizens believe that the Single Market is a positive thing and we also know that Europeans want us to pool our forces in areas such as foreign policy or justice & home affairs!**
- **Therefore, you, the policy-makers, have to ensure that one of the greatest achievements of the European project, the Single Market, runs smoothly and that its benefits can be fully reaped by amending legislation so that it is workable for industry and introduces more flexibility for entrepreneurship! People want to be able to develop freely and to implement their ideas and life plans without too much interference from the State !**
- **We have therefore created a small brochure which you can find at the entrance, designed to help you in your communications with the electorate and which gives you some figures, creative ideas and arguments.**

- **3 ½ years ago, in Lisbon, the 15 leaders gathered to formulate an ambitious goal: to make Europe the most dynamic, competitive knowledge-based region in the world by 2010!**
- **UNICE from the outset has supported this goal and its unexpectedly bold ambition...**
- **However, more than 3 years have passed and many of those who have agreed on these goals are now the brake on their achievement! Our governments!**
- **As President Cox put it in a recent speech:**

“One can, for example, note that those countries, which to the highest degree have implemented the Lisbon recommendations also are the ones who have enjoyed big declines in unemployment and above-average growth. This is not a centre-left point. This is not a centre-right point. This is our practical European experience.”
- **I would therefore like to use this occasion to make a strong plea to you: if we are serious about our ambitions and if we want to keep the promises made to our citizens to offer them better living conditions and an economic framework for**

growth which will be able to afford our social systems in the future, we have to deliver on:

- 1. Better and lifelong education**
- 2. Innovation**
- 3. Free trade**
- 4. Removing barriers to the internal market**
- 5. Streamline the regulatory environment and more generally:**

- Fostering a more positive attitude towards risk-taking and entrepreneurship particularly for manufacturing industry!**
- For this we need a new industrial policy creating favourable economic and political framework conditions which enable European manufacturing industry to improve its competitiveness without interventionist measures.**
- The first test for this will be the chemicals policy, or better known as “*REACH*”! Parliament will be discussing this far-*REACH*-ing proposal in the months to come.**
- We can only say that if you want to maintain a chemical sector in Europe which is cutting-edge in terms of innovation and profits and which employs millions of people in the EU, you **MUST** change this proposal into a workable system.**

- **Last Saturday the Heads of State and Government opened the Intergovernmental Conference:**
- **UNICE has taken note of the European Parliament's call to the IGC not to challenge the consensus achieved by the Convention and to approve the draft Constitutional treaty *"without altering its basic balance"*.**
- **The outcome of the Convention is a compromise achieved in a real European spirit and, as an observer member of the Convention, UNICE supports this position. Of course, what matters more for business is that the IGC ensures that the competitiveness and efficiency of the EU remain at the centre of any discussion on reform of the treaties.**
- **To conclude, I hope that the good relationships that UNICE and its members have had for years with ALL the institutions will continue, and be beneficial to all of us.**
- **Allow me also to express my desire that by this congenial evening UNICE will become your preferred and natural partner for all important business-related matters.**

- **I wish you all the best for your campaigns next year and hope that we can now continue the interesting discussion over a glass of Champagne!**

- **THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOU ATTENTION**