



## ***“The Voice of SMEs in Europe”***

### **Press Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **UEAPME urges Italian Government to implement Charter for Small Business and adopt SME friendly actions during its presidency in 2003**

**Brussels, December 04th, 2002.** On the occasion of today’s meeting with the Italian Minister for European Affairs, Mr. Rocco Buttiglione, UEAPME, Europe’s SMEs employers association, stressed the need for the implementation of the Charter adopted in Feira in 2000. During the meeting UEAPME also asked the Italian Government to support other issues that are of paramount importance for SMEs in the course of its European Union presidency in July 2003. “In the past we have seen a large rhetorical support for SMEs cause which culminated in the adoption of the European Charter for Small Business. But so far little has been done to create the right framework in which SMEs can grow in order to boost the European economy. Now it is time to take concrete actions” Mr. **Andrea Bonetti**, UEAPME’s President, declared during the meeting.

Among SME’s top priorities, UEAPME called on the Italian Government to fully implement the ten lines of action of the Charter adopted by all Member States. The organisation asked for the Charter to be given legal value through the inclusion of its principles in the future European Treaty. Mr. Bonetti argued, “By inserting the principles of the Charter in the new Treaty the European Union authorities will back their rhetoric statements and officially demonstrate the socio-economic importance of SMEs.”

On the on-going debate on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), UEAPME’s President asked Mr. Buttiglione to consider SMEs specificity and rejected the idea of applying current CSR tools and approaches-which were designed for large corporations- to SMEs. Bonetti reiterated UEAPME’s demand for a voluntary approach to CSR and for an emphasis on the exchange of experiences and good practices. Regarding the social dialogue, he emphasised on UEAPME’s desire to be considered as an independent European Social Partner and to be invited on an independent basis to all meetings of interest for European Social Partners.

Concerning VAT rates on labour intensive services, Bonetti asked for a support by the Italian presidency for a solution jointly elaborated with the European Commission. The solution should allow all the Member states to apply reduced VAT rates for labour intensive services where shadow economy is a problem and where such a reduction does not negatively affect the internal market. Mr. Bonetti also told Mr. Buttiglione that UEAPME wants to be involved and consulted when this issue is discussed in the council.

Finally UEAPME seized the opportunity of the meeting to ask the Italian government to support the necessity of specific programmes for micro and small businesses at EU level following the revision of the current SME definition.

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