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UNIONS AND NGOS CALL FOR EU LEADERS COURAGE TO INVEST IN A SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR THE ENLARGED EUROPE

The European Environmental Bureau, the European Trade Unions Confederation and the Social Platform urged EU leaders to set a clear plan to ensure a prosperous, safe and sustainable future for the enlarged Union at this week's Spring Summit.

"Europe's growth and competitiveness can never be sustainable unless EU leaders broaden today's short-sighted agenda. Sustainable development means investing in people and combating social exclusion, protecting the environment and creating quality jobs. These goals must not play second fiddle to competitiveness," said the three organizations.

In particular, unions, social and environmental NGOs call EU leaders to agree on a major programme of public investment in quality public goods and services which will trigger positive social, environmental, and employment results. The organisations have laid down concrete proposals in their joint Manifesto "Investing for a Sustainable Future", that focuses on crucial sustainable investment initiatives, such as housing and transport.

"Sustainable investment in housing means creating access to housing for all which is in good condition, secure and healthy and sustainable transport means ensuring clean, accessible and integrated transport systems. We want to see such initiatives become part of the Spring Summit agreements in 2004 and thereafter."

Furthermore, the three organisations make a set of proposals that would help steer the economy in the right social and environmental direction, while ensuring the creation of prosperity and employment.

John Monks, ETUC General Secretary declared: "The Stability and Growth Pact must be brought into line with the Lisbon-Gothenburg sustainable development objectives. The Pact must be intelligently reformed to encourage long-term public investment that brings about the changes required to promote sustainable development. In particular, long-term investment spending geared towards sustainable development should be excluded from the definition of public sector deficit."

Ralph Hallo, EEB President added: "Last year, the Spring Summit decided that work had to be done by the ECOFIN Council on reforming subsidies that have considerable negative effects on the environment and that are incompatible with sustainable development. Nothing visible has happened

so far. This year's Summit should rebuke this lack of action and re-enforce the demand, this time with a concrete deadline: a plan of action presented to the 2005 Summit."

Anne-Sophie Parent, Social Platform President said: "We urge immediate implementation at national, regional and local level of the social and environmental dimensions of the new EU public procurement legislation. Through concrete measures such as favoring contractors that operate in a social and environmentally responsible way, public authorities can make a critical contribution to sustainable development in their community and at a global level. Recognition of the legitimacy of social and environmental criteria must be integrated in Members' policies at national and local level and guidelines and practical tools for implementation must be put in place."

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