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**JOINT DECLARATION
BY THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL PARTNERS
IN THE SUGAR INDUSTRY
(EFFAT/CEFS)
BRATISLAVA CONFERENCE
NOVEMBER 4th - 5th 2002**

Mindful of the major political and economic challenge represented by Enlargement, the social partners in the European sugar industry, EFFAT¹ and CEFS², have decided to organise a Conference in Bratislava on November 4th and 5th on the impact of this event for their industrial sector.

Bringing together representatives of employers and employees in five candidate countries, together with representatives of the authorities, this Conference is an opportunity for joint deliberations on the present situation of the sugar industry in Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia and for an initial assessment of the measures to be taken before accession. It is also an occasion to begin preparing, with the help of the authorities, for effective adoption of the Community *acquis*. It is thus aimed at identifying with each of the parties concerned - public authorities, employers, employees and their representative organisations - the specific role that they will be called upon to play in order to make the optimal use of the pre-accession period with a view to achieving a successful EU enlargement.

The social partners are aware that adoption of the Community *acquis* implies the need to :

- Ensure that their industrial sector is sufficiently competitive to enable it fully to assume its responsibilities vis-à-vis the different stakeholders.
- Adapt the different market organisations so that they progressively achieve Community efficiency. A number of legislative measures are gradually being implemented in the different countries in the framework of the preparation of the accession, but substantial work remains to be done to implement them, with the help and support of the authorities.

¹ The European Federation of Trade Unions for Food, Agriculture, and Tourism covers 120 affiliates representing 2.5 million members in 35 countries, among which Hungary, Poland, the Czech republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Romania, Bulgaria.

² The Comité Européen des Fabricants de Sucre represents the sugar manufacturers and refiners in 15 European Countries (except for Luxemburg, plus Switzerland) as well as in Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia.

- Implement the EU social and environmental standards.
- Improve the competitiveness of companies, particularly in certain regions where the industrial structures differ and where the number of sugar factories remains very high. In the Union, for instance, the number of sugar factories declined significantly between 1991 and 2000, and this restructuring continues today.

The social partners have also observed that the Community regulations are themselves determined by two main factors linked to international trade :

- Both for the present Union and for the future enlarged Europe, the WTO rules fix restrictive limits on the level of exports with refunds.
- The recent policy of opening up the borders of the European Communities to the sugar coming from the Balkans and the Least Developed Countries poses a problem of increasing oversupply of the European Market.

In view of the importance of these challenges, the social partners are determined to maintain constant communications with policy-makers, at both national and European level, so as to favour the best possible policy adjustments.

Analysing the essential efforts that are currently being made to modify the industrial landscape, the social partners emphasize the role of the European Social Dialogue in this process and more particularly :

- Reaffirm their willing to pursue their regular exchange of information and views on all questions with a social impact for their sector, as currently practised within the context of the European social dialogue³
- Confirm the possibility to take, if necessary, joint political initiatives within the frame of their Dialogue.
- Agree to further promote, as far as possible, the development of an enlarged social dialogue in the frame of their European Sectorial Committee.
- Propose to create to this effect a specific CEEC ad hoc group within the frame of their sectorial committee in order to :
 - . identify the issues of common interest on which they will be able to progress significantly and usefully in the enlarged Europe.
 - . raise some aspects linked to the implementation of the European legislation, such as the legislation on information and consultation which states that "timely information and consultation is a necessity for the success of the restructuring and adaptation of undertakings to the new conditions"⁴.
- Commit themselves to continue the current dialogue on Corporate Social Responsibility in their CSR ad hoc group with the aim of being able to present a joint Declaration.
- Undertake to discuss together any appropriate measure concerning vocational training which will favour sound preparations for accession and an effective capacity for conversion if necessary.

³ See the Agreement between the CEFS and EFFAT signed on 12th November 1997 and the Rules of Procedure of the Dialogue Committee in the Sugar Sector signed on 23rd November 1999.

⁴ See Directive n° 2002/14/EC on information and consultation of employees in the European Community - 9th Recital (OJEC L 80 of 23.3.2002).

According to the Social Dialogue Agreement between CEFS and EFFAT, this Enlarged Dialogue is in no way intended to replace the dialogue at national level, of which rights and competences remain unchanged, but aspires to complement it by paving the way for mutual understanding and implementation of joint concrete and pragmatic actions aimed at strengthening each party's social responsibility within the context of enlargement.

As a conclusion the social partners express the wish that, with the complementary assistance and support of the public authorities, a genuinely constructive and responsible dialogue can be established with a view to laying the foundations for an enlarged Europe capable of combining social model with economic competitiveness in the applicant countries.

Bratislava, 5th November 2002



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