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SME UNION President Leitl congratulates EU Council President Sarkozy

SME UNION President Christoph Leitl addressed a letter to the out-going EU Council French President Nicolas Sarkozy for the excellent and diligent work he has completed and to congratulate him for the leadership he has shown during the 6 months mandate of the EU Council rotating presidency. Following is the message from our President:

Honourable President of the European Council, dear President Sarkozy,

The French EU Council Presidency is coming to its last days and I, in my capacity of President of the SME UNION, the business organization of the European People's Party, would very much like to extend to you, all my congratulations for the most diligent and important work that you have realized during the past 6 months. During this time, the European Union had to face many obstacles which have endangered Europe's security and stability. Your leadership and your strong willingness to show that the EU is strong and can overcome any barrier has proved that this was possible and that it is up to us to climb the mountain. European citizens have regained trust in the EU and its leaders.

The worldwide financial turmoil threatening the EU has been managed in a remarkable way. Your efforts have put the EU ahead of the United States in pushing for solutions to the international economic threats as well as in setting the international financial agenda. We do not need less but more Europe, a Europe that is able to address the real problems of the economy. It is time that those countries that are interested in a further integration of the EU to get real and set concrete actions. In the past Europe has proven its ability to prosper in diversity and it depends on us that the EU continues to be strong. I believe that the only way of finding swift solutions is to have dynamic and strong leaders who can take decisions and manage turmoil situations. The EU has to take a strong stand on the international scene and has to become a serious actor of the international relations that is capable of shaping globalization. The EU can be proud of its Heads of State and Government who have called for a "new constitution for global financial markets" at the European Council in October. The result of this initiative was the G-20 summit in Washington, which means a worldwide leadership of the international orchestra.

Another success of the last six months was the Small Business Act. In fact, the SME UNION has intensively and from the very beginning contributed to the development of the SBA by providing input and feedback. . I believe that the SBA has the potential for completely changing European SME policy and I hope you agree with me that it therefore needs to be more than a replicating exercise of what already exists. The Small Business Act has to become a politically binding act for the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Member States. Moreover, I want to salute the idea of the European initiative to boost financing for small and medium sized enterprises that marries perfectly with the announced initiative of the European Investment Bank to help SMEs through these uncertain times. I fully support this initiative because of its importance for SMEs that face succession or growth financing.

The strong and diligent team of the French EU Council Presidency has been vital for its success. We realize that a great dose of dynamism and enthusiasm has been injected to Europe and into the minds of the European citizens. Beside their extraordinary efforts to support SMEs and to make the Small Business Act (SBA) a valid success this has been one of the reasons why this year's SME UNION Political Entrepreneurship Awards were presented to Christine Lagarde, French Minister of Economy, Industry and Employment and Philippe Maystadt, President of the European Investment Bank. I had the pleasure of meeting Minister Lagarde personally and I was most certainly impressed by her courage and her impetus.

The SME UNION of the EPP entertains excellent relations with our members in France. As a matter of facts, our friends of the SME Union France within UMP, represented by President Jean Marie Virepinte, by Secretary General Patrick Moulin and MEP Alain Lamassoure, are crucial partners for our work and our engagement for a SME friendly environment. A well functioning economy relies on SMEs who can develop and grow. SMEs have a key role in future positive economic development inside and outside the European Union.

European Policies must focus on the creation of an economic, fiscal and logistic environment in which entrepreneurial spirit can prosper. I know that actors as the UMP share with us a pro business ideology and that we have the same objectives: promoting entrepreneurship, promoting market economy, civil society and democracy.

Finally, I would like to express my enjoyment of knowing that we will still profit from your participation and involvement in the European Union Troika. We need strong personalities who will reinforce the position of the EU in a globalized world. This is the path we must take if we want to encourage a European identity where our citizens feel that their governments will not let them down. The European Union needs two things to prove itself as a leading power: real challenges and strong leadership. Now, after 6 months of the French EU Presidency, we know how it has to be done.

Yours sincerely,



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SME UNION (Small and Medium Entrepreneurs Union) of the EPP (European People's Party) is the network of pro-business Christian-Democrat, Conservative and Liberal politicians and political organizations. Its main objective is to help in shaping EU policy in a more SME friendly way. www.sme-union.org