**Speech by Christa Schweng,**

**President of the European Economic and Social Committee**

**Conference on the Future of Europe feedback event**

**2nd Dec 2022**

*[check against delivery]*

Ladies and gentlemen,

I can confirm, on behalf of the European Economic and Social Committee, that the Conference on the Future of Europe succeeded in providing relevant ideas.

Ideas for a Europe that prospers economically and socially,
Ideas to make Europe more competitive and thus more resilient,

Ideas for a Europe that leaves nobody behind.

Another value of this Conference was that it brought together so many citizens for true supra-national debates.

The EESC -the only EU institution bridging Brussels and civil society organisations in the EU countries- actively contributed to the outreach, debates and recommendations of the Conference. We supported the organisation of 75 events all around Europe, gathering thousands of participants who encoded dozens of ideas on the Conference platform.

The EESC was recognised as a key player, with recommendations calling to empower and strengthen the Committee in the future architecture of European democracy. As a result of the Conference proposals, there is a lot to deliver.

Now, time has come to stop talking about outcome and to start talking about impact for European citizens' daily lives!

Delivering tangible improvements needs to become the focus: citizens are not interested in the "how", the technicalities, but in the "what". Very concrete steps can be taken to reinforce citizens' participation and youth involvement in the EU decision making. For instance, the EESC is working to underpin an existing, very powerful tool, the European Citizens' Initiative. We also propose the introduction of an EU Youth Test to bring a youth perspective in legislation.

We welcome the decision of the Commission to make Citizens' Panels a more regular feature of our democratic life. The EESC can and is willing to be a strong ally in this process, as it was during the Conference.

The civil societies organisations and 90 million citizens we represent, including not only employers and workers but also civil society at large, can help and will make the difference. Deeply rooted in their national realities, they can not only deliver opinions and assess legislation based on their unique expertise: they can also mediate and contribute to creating ownership amongst citizens on the EU.

We renew our availability to work together and to put our expertise, experience and networks at Europe's service. We are eager to play our part: this is our mission and our "raison d'être", now more than ever!

Thank you.