

**Speech by Cillian Lohan,**

**EESC Vice-President for Communication**

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**EP Paul-Henri Spaak Hemicycle / remote**

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Thank you, and I am honoured to have been elected as your Vice-President for this coming mandate.

My last five years here at EESC have helped me understand why an institution like this is so important. At the start of my mandate I buried myself in the day to day work of being a member. I rapporteured opinions, I chaired meetings, I drafted amendments, and I debated with members who came from a very different perspective than my own.

I came to understand that our purpose here is not to sit around and talk but is actually founded in action. Each of us comes here, to the often intimidating meeting rooms and often suffocating formalities, from a network at home. Those networks give us the unique perspective of the impact of the EU on the day to day lives of different sectors of society.

I have also seen in my time here, that we can have an impact with our work. I have seen this with our work on Circular Economy, our establishment of the joint project with the European Commission, The European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform. I have seen it with our opinion on the Reflection Paper on a Sustainable Europe, referenced in Council conclusions, and I have seen it in colleagues work influencing positions adopted at the European Parliament.

It is these actions, that convinced me to run for this office – our civil solidarity prizes, our Your Europe Your Say initiative, our collaboration with stakeholders and our practical attempts to amplify the voices of those who find it hard to penetrate the institutions – never highlighted more clearly that with our institutional support for the climate strikers and the youth movement.

This is the core of our work. To put it in the most simple terms these types of results is what I want to help all of us as members, individually and collectively to achieve.

I gladly take on responsibility for the Communication Directorate in this mandate. Within Communications we have the tools and structures to allow us to better amplify the work that we do. We have foundations that were built by Isabel Cano, by Gonzalo before her, and by the dedicated and dynamic staff within the Communications directorate.

And of course we do not operate in a vacuum. There is a political agenda and a context for all that we do.

Apart from the terrible health consequences, and the social challenges we have faced in dealing with lockdowns and isolation requirements, we cannot ignore the change of the global macro-economic landscape in the last 10 months.

Many sectors face enormous challenges to survive. And this, at a time, when the climate emergency continues. We have the ambitious European Green Deal that sets the agenda for the coming years in terms of the legislative program. This is designed to achieve, sector by sector, the urgent changes we need in order to achieve our commitments under the Paris Agreement.

We have the Sustainable Development Goals, designed to be implemented in each member state, as well as in our international relations, as a mechanism to achieve the targets we have set for ourselves.

These are the basic tools to help us deliver on the biggest issues that will impact ordinary people all over Europe and beyond.

We have the power of the youth movement, with their loud calls for systemic change. Their influence reaching the political sphere from the United Nations in New York to the EU institutions.

At our last plenary session we adopted a proposal to lead the way in facilitating youth engagement, through Roundtables on Climate and Sustainability, our new President has delivered opinions on this in previous mandates also.

Within our membership, here today amongst our wide range of expertise and interests, we have the diversity of opinions to allow us to rehearse the strongest arguments, and to find, through understanding, through fact based decision making, through scientific certainty, a way to build consensus on how best to proceed.

That is what we do best. We build consensus. And it is this power that brings weight to our opinions.

I don’t sit in this position as your Vice President in isolation – I have a core team of members in the COCOM, I will work with the presidency and the range of leaders within the members and our structures, from groups to sections and observatories.

Working together, collaboratively is where our strength lies – with the support of a talented and willing administration.

Participating actively in decision making, and critically, facilitating other stakeholders to engage also – putting the participation back into participatory democracy.

I thank you again for choosing me to take this role for the next 2 and a half years. I look forward to what we can achieve together.