

Speech by Séamus BOLAND, President of the Civil Society Organisations' Group of the EESC

Plenary debate on the situation in Ukraine and the adoption of the *EESC resolution Ukraine – from relief to reconstruction – proposals by European civil society*,
with H. E. Ambassador Vsevolod CHENTSOV, Head of the Ukrainian Mission to the European Union, Marta BARANDIY, representing Promote Ukraine, and Mariya KOROLCHUK, representing the Community Organised Relief Effort (CORE) and Funky Citizens

Thursday 16 June 2022

Your Excellency, dear civil society colleagues,

I find myself in the unenviable situation of being the **co-author** of not one, but of **two** EESC resolutions on the aggression against Ukraine launched by the Russian Federation, led by its President, Vladimir Putin. And I choose my words carefully, as in this 21st Century war on European soil, **misinformation** and **disinformation** play a crucial role.

But even well respected media outlets now speak of the **potential threats** of **nuclear attacks**; or of a breakdown in '**Arctic dialogue**', which habitually takes place between Russia and the 7 actual or would-be members of NATO. And in all of this **cacophony**, what comes to mind is a quotation by **Albert Einstein**, who ominously said: “*I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones.*”

Perhaps we should also recall the words of **Jean-Paul Sartre** who wisely stated: “*Once you hear the details of victory, it is hard to distinguish it from a defeat.*”

It is precisely for these reasons, that in the draft resolution we have called on the EU to forcefully express its **full support** for a **rapid ceasefire** and for the **peaceful resolution** to the war. This war **contradicts** the **history, philosophy and identity** of the EU. It is a threat to our **values** and to the **democratic rights** and **freedoms** of all Europeans, which are defended daily by **civil society organisations**.

Coming from civil society myself, it is my firm belief that these actors must be at the **centre** of the **programming, implementation** and **monitoring** of EU and **national humanitarian assistance** to Ukraine – both **during the war** and in the **re-building of the country**. EU funds for humanitarian assistance must be **increased** and disbursed particularly at the **regional** and **local levels**.

It is also imperative that **all refugees**, irrespective of their **ethnic origin, gender** or **disabilities**, should be treated **equally** and with **respect**. In the war zones, at the borders and in the host countries. Above all, we must not allow these individuals to fall into **poverty** or to be misused by **criminal gangs**. We have a **responsibility** to each and every refugee under European soil!

Ladies and gentlemen, 2022 will be remembered as the year when Europe went to war again. Allow me to recall that this is also the **European Year of Youth**. As such, **young Ukrainians** and **youth organisations** should be directly involved in **rebuilding the country**, in collaboration with youth organisations from our Member States. In all of this misery, we do need to keep hold of some **hope** and our **young encapsulate that hope!** Thank you for your attention.