



*European Economic and Social Committee
The President*

Brussels, 11 July 2012, Charlemagne

**EESC Plenary debate
"Bringing Rio home"**

Staffan Nilsson's speech

Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
—————
Check Against Delivery

Welcome Laurence Tubiana, Director at IDDRI, Paris, Olivier Consolo, director CONCORD and rapporteur of the EESC Liaison Group, Commissioner Janez Potočnik.

The EESC has been very actively involved in the run-up to Rio, enabling civil society dialogue in preparation of the Conference and at the Conference.

We were **committed to contributing to the EU's position** and to **mobilising EU civil society** in order to push EU and world leaders towards an ambitious outcome.

Now we want to **bring Rio home**, share the assessment of the EESC Rio delegation with all EESC members and **start dialogue with wider European civil society and the European Commission on the Rio follow-up**.



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As so many other stakeholders, we do have **mixed feelings about the Rio outcome**. It is good that we have an agreement and the outcome text includes various elements on which we can build on. My colleague **Hajo Wilms will elaborate this assessment further**.

But we can't help seeing the **huge discrepancy between the Rio text and the aspirations, ambitions and commitments** which were visible in the myriad of Rio+20 events and the broad variety of statements from **civil society**.

So when we talk about "bringing Rio home" - this refers not only to implementing the Rio decisions and follow-up on the processes launched, but also to **seize the momentum, continue civil society actions and civil society push for political decisions**.

The **feedback we have got is a positive one** and we already have heard several **requests that we continue on the path chosen for the Rio preparation also in respect to the Rio follow-up**.

As I already mentioned it, **the road from Rio is at least as important as the road from Rio**: we can't afford to release our efforts now, the situation of our planet, the situation of millions of people suffering from hunger, malnutrition and distributional injustice don't allow this.

And the argument that we can't afford investment in sustainable development in a time when many EU member states are struggling with the economic and financial crises is not a valid argument, as I so often said here before: the two are interlinked and **we should address the crises with coherent and strong policies for an inclusive, green economy**.

I will now pass the floor to our first speaker, Laurence Tubiana.



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Speaking points at the end of the debate:

Thank you very much for your interventions!

Yes, indeed, we are committed to contribute to the best of our knowledge and capacity, to the Rio+20 follow-up, as the advisory body in the EU institutional set-up representing civil society.

In the autumn I **will invite** our colleagues from Commission, Parliament, Council, and Committee of the Regions to an **inter-institutional brainstorming workshop on the EU Rio-follow-up**.

I **invite our body – the Sustainable Development Observatory to continue the pre-Rio approach also for the follow-up of Rio** and to continue facilitating broad European civil society dialogue and engagement, as well as to coordinate with the REX section in order to integrate sustainable development issues in our structured dialogue with civil society representatives in other parts of the world.

I see as first list of thematic Rio-issues to be followed up:

- the Sustainable Development Goals,
- civil society involvement,
- social dimension of sustainable development.

I would like to stress the **importance of the process for defining the Sustainable Development Goals**. The EU has to be strong and vocal here and civil society has to be heard and we need to listen. **The EESC is ready to engage strongly and to facilitate civil society involvement in this process, like we did in the run-up to Rio.**



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In Europe we have to walk the Rio talk, which means that also here **in the Committee** we will make sure that, when we work on our opinions on Commission initiatives, we will consider to mainstream the sustainable development aspects. In particular, **we may also need to have in mind our Rio messages when we work on the Europe 2020 strategy**.



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