



*European Economic and Social Committee
The President*

Brazil, 19 June 2012

6th EU-Brazil Round Table

Staffan Nilsson's opening speech

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Excellencies,
Dear friends and colleagues,

Please allow me to share my satisfaction for being today with you at the opening of this dialogue forum between European and Brazilian civil society organisations.

I would also like to thank our Brazilian hosts for their hospitality and welcome. We are aware that Brazil has worked very hard so that everything is ready for the United Nations conference on sustainable development and for hundreds of side-events.

The European Economic and Social Committee has been actively preparing for this moment, in particular through fostering dialogue aiming at a joint understanding of the issues at stake and at common civil society recommendations.



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I am pleased to say that this work has been particularly fruitful with our Brazilian partners. We have been working for more than one year with the Brazilian Council for Economic and Social Development on our views on sustainable development. All this work has been synthesised in a joint report by the two organisations, which aims at contributing to the debates in Rio.

Now, I would like to briefly summarise the main concerns and interests that we share.

Eradicating poverty and secure access to enough food, clean water and sustainable energy for all must be a top priority on the Rio+20 agenda. Fight against poverty is a vital step for sustainable development processes to move forward.

The **social dimension** must be fully integrated in the outcome of Rio+20. We must avoid the situation where the need for skilled workers in green technologies plunge into unemployment or poor working conditions those who will not be able to update their skills. We need to guarantee a fair transition, with social welfare cover, training and skills acquisition opportunities. Particular attention must be paid to gender equality.

Furthermore, we support the Social Protection Floor initiative of the United Nations, with a view to facilitate access to basic services and social transfers for vulnerable social sectors.

Among other measures, **public authorities** have the responsibility to take decisive measures to establish the necessary regulatory frameworks, fiscal policy instruments and investment geared to sustainable development. They should also encourage **private sector** to fully play its key role in achieving a transition to sustainable development.

As part of an overarching strategy, **greening the economy** must favour resource efficiency, increasing the use of renewable energies, lower greenhouse gas emissions and generating less negative externalities. An inclusive green economy should strike a balance between social, ecological and economic aspects while offering opportunities for countries in all stages of economic development.



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To achieve resource efficiency, it will be necessary to expand and reorientate investment in **research, development and innovation**. Special attention must be paid to the impact of the costs of technology on the poorest countries and most vulnerable sections of the population. To that end, it will be necessary to encourage cooperation and technology transfer.

Negotiators in Rio should adopt a 10-year work programme on sustainable **consumption and production patterns**. This is not only necessary from an environmental viewpoint, but is also an economic and social requirement. Actions must be taken in the field of public procurement. A life-cycle based approach must be promoted, including the concepts of re-use, repair and recycling. In order to ensure a smooth transition, particular attention must be paid to small and micro enterprises.

Consumers play a central role. More and better information on products, labelling and advertising is necessary to give consumers the means for selecting more sustainable products.

We must not forget the specific features of **urban and rural areas** and sustainable development should be a cross-cutting issue. This involves, but not exclusively, low energy consuming transport, environmental sanitation services for everyone, water supply and waste management.

All these measures must be part of a comprehensive strategy, with a clear implementation roadmap and monitoring indicators.

In this regard, we welcome the initiative to establish by 2015 a set of global **Sustainable Development Goals**, taking a balanced approach to all three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental issues) and complementing the Millennium Development Goals.

In order to better assess development, we must go beyond GDP and agree on **sustainable development indicators**, incorporating economic performance, social well-being and environmental quality.

We must not forget that funding will be needed to rise up to the challenges ahead. We need new arrangements for **global financing**, exploring the



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possibilities for expanding innovative financial and fiscal mechanisms, capable of distributing costs gradually.

Civil society organisations have much to say. Business and workers' organisations, consumers' organisations, farmers' and environmental associations and other associations working in this field are well placed to highlight opportunities, disseminate skills, raise awareness and foster education and training.

I would like to urge political leaders to agree at the Rio+20 Conference on additional measures to improve effective civil society involvement and achieve empowerment at global, national and local level in the transition to sustainable societies.

Thank you all for your attention.



For further details:

Coralia Catana | EESC President's Spokesperson

+32 (0)25469963 | +32 (0)498984613

E-mail: coralia.catana@eesc.europa.eu | president.eesc@eesc.europa.eu

Internet: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.staffan-nilsson-speeches>