



European Economic and Social Committee
The President

Brussels, 10 May 2012, room JDE 61, 2.30 – 6 pm

**Meeting EESC Rio+20 delegation with
representatives from European civil society organisations and networks**

Staffan Nilsson's remarks

Seul le texte prononcé fait foi

Check Against Delivery

I would very much like to welcome our guests from European civil society networks and organisations.

Thank you for accepting my invitation to **follow up on our work on sustainable development issues** that we have done with you since over a year.

My motto for my presidency at the EESC is *engaging people for a sustainable Europe*, therefore I have made the preparations for the UN Conference on Sustainable Development **(Rio+20) this year one of my key priorities.**

When we last met in the context of our major civil society conference "Go sustainable, be responsible! European civil society on the road to Rio+20" on 7 and 8 February this year, **we together sent a set of very strong key messages to our European negotiators**, right at the moment when they were deciding about our common EU position for the Rio negotiations.



European Economic and Social Committee
The President

At that moment I had already invited all of you to continue our common work in the run-up to Rio.

The purpose of today's meeting is two-fold.

We thought it would be good if we, representatives from European organised civil society, would meet to **exchange information about planned activities** in Rio and **to see how we could further foster our common values and positions** throughout these diverse activities.

The second reason for today's meeting turns out to be very timely. Originally we had invited **Timo Makela, Director of DG Environment, to give us a de-briefing on ongoing Rio negotiations in New York.**

Now that the second round of informal negotiations has ended last Friday leaving the vast majority of points unresolved, I think that **we have to renew our message that we urge world leaders to commit to a concrete action plan** leading to sustainable development and poverty eradication within the limitations of the planet.

We also have to strongly remind our EU negotiators, thus Timo Makela in person, that **we want the EU to play a leading part in these negotiators.**

We know from our participation at the negotiation sessions in March and in April that the **EU is indeed striving for an ambitious outcome**, that we have sent our best negotiators there to reach an outcome capable of meeting the challenges we are facing.

Hans-Joachim Wilms, Chair of our Sustainable Development Observatory and our Rio rapporteur, has reported back from the negotiations last week, and we would like to use this opportunity to **thank our EU negotiators not only for their continuous efforts for an ambitious outcome but also for their engagement to further strengthen civil society participation and to ensure a just transition to an inclusive green economy.**

We as European economic and social Committee are using our contacts with civil society in other parts of the world to foster dialogue on sustainable development issues, to exchange best practices, to enhance common understanding.



European Economic and Social Committee
The President

Only this morning we have met with our counterparts from Brazil, China and Russia.

Our message to you, Mr Makela, is that **we want you to keep up your efforts in the negotiations**, civil society is strongly demanding an ambitious outcome of this conference – and civil society will also continue contributing to the transition to sustainable development, at all levels needed.



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>