Thank you to all participants, and to Lore who has presented the agenda.

The European trade unions and workers support this Conference.

We are highly committed to contribute to shaping a fairer European Union that takes care of people.

When this process was launched there was a need:

* to reconnect citizens to institutions,
* to overcome inequalities and social exclusion as consequences of the financial crisis and austerity policies,
* to cope with the challenges of climate change and digitalisation,
* to rebuild European democracy.

Today, after the pandemic, these issues need to be addressed even more urgently.

The institutional process took long, so now there is limited time left, and European workers and citizens expect all of us to deliver.

We need to get out of our bubbles, go local and talk to people.

The Conference should be an opportunity for a real and in-depth discussion, with the full involvement of citizens, organised civil society, social partners.

We ask you to make sure that we are included in all fora for discussion, including working groups and citizens panels,

and we will do our best to mobilise workers and businesses, at all levels, for a good and meaningful outcome.

Social partners are very well rooted in the local, national, sectoral dimension, we can bring a significant contribution to this discussion.

It’s very important we are not kept separated from civil society and citizen, full integration will make the discussions more productive.

We thank you all institutions for ensuring our participation in the Executive Board and in the Plenary.

We are actively involved in the online platform too and have established strong coordination among ourselves.

Now we are ready to participate in the working groups, where the actual content and proposals will be discussed.

And we would like to have an impact on the final outcomes of the Conference.

Thanks to the at-the-time PM of Belgium Guy Verhofstadt, social partners co-signed the conclusions of the EU Convention 18 years ago, we would like to be able to do the same this time.

But it’s not only about process, we need ambitious content, we need to push for radical change.

As we have said at the first Plenary:

* Radical change on health, safety and social protection, by strengthening public services and our welfare state, by saving jobs and businesses, without which there is no future.
* Radical change in our economic model, by moving from an economy that serves profits to a social market economy that benefits people, that goes beyond GDP, beyond blind fiscal rules, to build wellbeing and better opportunities, equality and inclusion for all.
* Radical change to manage environmental transformation and digitalisation through just transition. This doesn’t only mean training and reskilling, but quality job creation, universal social protection, full involvement of communities and social partners in a comprehensive governance that leaves nobody behind.
* Radical change means that every person in Europe can fully enjoy fundamental rights, social and labour rights, without discrimination based on gender, age, ethnicity and migration background, religion, belief or political orientation.
* Radical change means defending democratic values and the rule of law, but also social democracy, based on social dialogue, collective bargaining and workers’ participation.

Only through this radical change will we be able to defend the European project as a value worth fighting for.

We need to make the best out of this Conference, by giving people a voice.

And after listened, we have to go back to them with ideas and proposals that can improve their way of life.

And I want to emphasise again that we will also need to change ourselves.

It is necessary to ensure more transparency in democratic processes, institutions must be more accountable, decision making must not to be paralysed by endless discussions, national egoisms and vetoes.

It would be a big mistake to exclude from the outcomes of this Conference a redesign of the architecture of the European Union.

We expect Treaty changes to be considered,

First of all, to unblock the paralysis of unanimity and the obsession of subsidiarity, to move to a more integrated and ambitious EU, which requires QMV on more crucial issues, including economic and social policy.

And if Treaty changes will be possible, we advocate for a Social Progress Protocol to guarantee that social rights take precedence over economic freedoms in the event of a conflict.

It is also necessary for the European Social Pillar to become a building block of our social market economy.

Radical change, bottom-up participation, and concrete outcomes which make a difference – that’s what trade unions expect from the Conference on the Future of Europe.

We, the social partners represent tens of millions of workers and employers all over Europe and we are present at the European, national, sectoral and local level with our structures, representatives and activists.

As I said, we are ready to contribute to the debate and to the outcomes of the Conference with our ideas and proposals, which come from the ground, from the real economy and from workplaces across Europe.

We are committed to engage and activate our members, but for this to be effective we need to be fully on board, in all the phases of this process.

FULL participation for Social Partners will contribute actively to the success of the Conference.