



**Miguel Angel Cabra de Luna speech-
EFC Autumn Assembly
7 November**

Good morning everyone,

First of all I would like to thank the EFC and Dafne for their invitation to open this first-ever Autumn Assembly and to the European Economic and Social Committee for hosting the event.

I would also like to congratulate Gerry, Rosa and their teams for the successful organisation of this extraordinary Assembly, which kickstarts a new phase in the relationship between EFC and DAFNE members and I think that you will agree that meeting in Brussels is an excellent opportunity to give visibility and voice to the needs of our sector at EU level and to give further impetus for the creation of the European Foundation Statute.

I am also very happy because philanthropy will finally have a new home in the heart of Brussels with the opening of Foundation House in 2013. I would like to thank Gerry for his drive and for inspiring our belief in this ambitious project. Thanks also goes, of course, to the generous financial commitment of the King Baudouin Foundation, Körber-Stiftung, Institusjonen Fritt Ord, Realdania, Stichting Fonds 1818 and the Van Leer Group Foundation. I look forward to seeing you all later at the House for the evening cocktail.

I am very glad to have the opportunity today to highlight the close and productive collaboration that exists between the EFC and EESC. As you may already know, the EFC and the EESC are both part of a Liaison Group which facilitates political dialogue between EU institutions and civil society. EESC, as consultative body to the EU institutions, has a significant impact on the EU's decision-making process.

Through the Social Economy group, the EESC ensures that the interests of social economy enterprises (including foundations) are taken on board when they make recommendations to the EU institutions for better policies. As spokesperson of the Social Economy Category, and as a member of EFC Governing Council, I feel that I play a bridge-like role between these two very important social actors.

This productive relationship should serve us as an example of how we can set a more strategic engagement between EU institutions and other key Europewide bodies. As Luca Jahier mentioned during his speech, we need fresh thinking on how we can demonstrate that foundations should be recognised as key players in the European arena, especially in this increasingly complex world.

I am wholly convinced that given the current context of economic crisis, more than ever, foundations have a key role to play at European and global levels. As you already know, the global financial crisis is having a negative impact on the civil society organizations everywhere and other actors with whom foundations work. National governments are also finding it difficult to act on the problems that we are all facing.

Foundations have a responsibility to respond to the situation and to seize the opportunity at this critical time when confidence in business and in state structures is at its lowest. I strongly believe that foundations are resilient organisations with built-in endurance and longevity that have repeatedly demonstrated their adeptness and creativity to responding to challenges.

However, I believe that at times of crisis we must not overlook preparing for and investing in the future. If we cut back, particularly in our philanthropic research and development capacity, we will pay the price for much longer than the recession will last. Of course, during such times, we must redouble our efforts to improve our efficiency and efficacy.

In these difficult times with increasing public sector cuts, we see even more the necessity of working together. Setting up partnerships among foundations and other organisations can create positive leverage, making more efficient use of our finances, expertise and time. Pooling resources combines strength and capacity, enabling us to gather and process information, identify grantees and deploy funds quicker than would have been possible as individual entities. I am therefore convinced that working together will be key for the future of the third sector.

If we can achieve so much on our own, imagine the enormous impact that foundations could have in joining forces? I would like to mention, from my own experience, an excellent example of productive partnership which is the European Consortium of Foundations on Human Rights and Disabilities, which I'm chairing. Our flagship project is the League of Historical and Accessible Cities which gather different European foundations working

together on a project focused on accessibility and historical heritage, collaborating at the same time with local authorities and having excellent results.

Successful navigation through the current crisis will require good judgment, but also strong leadership and plenty of courage, resolve and boldness. Foundations make a positive difference in society in good times and bad, they bring an added value different from that of other actors. Now, more than ever, we need to demonstrate that foundations represent a credible and valuable actor in our societies.

This Autumn Assembly could be a turning point for us to strengthen, consolidate and increase the relationships we've established between us, the EFC and DAFNE, with EU institutions and other stakeholders. Brussels may not be the centre of the world but let's not forget that it is place where the EU decides 80% of the legislation that is implemented in our home countries and that affect the different communities, actors, partners, etc, with whom we are engaged. Brussels equally hosts the largest media corps in the world and it is a source of inspiration for countries from other regions of the world. At a European level, we also have to be aware that European Court of Justice (ECJ) decisions affect foundations and that an understanding EC Treaty infringement procedures is needed.

Foundations have to make a difference by adding their unique voices and know-how to the shaping of EU policies that have a direct impact on national legislation and policies. As national, European and global levels of work are becoming more and more interconnected, to really make a difference there is a growing need and opportunity for foundations to use advocacy both at national level and outside their national borders to further their missions. The Autumn Assembly could be a vehicle to help us with these advocacy efforts.

Summing up, by continuing and further increasing our engagement with EU stakeholders and increasing the profile of foundations in Brussels , we will be contributing to ensuring that foundations play the role and get the recognition we deserve in society.

To conclude, I believe that this is the right moment to step up our efforts for cooperation within our sector.

Thank you very much for your attention.