

## **Transcript of speech by MEP Alojz Peterle**

*Distinguished Speakers, Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

*Thank you for inviting me to the plenary meeting of the European Commission Initiative on Breast Cancer and I regret that I cannot be with you in person. Not only as co-Chair of the Health Working Group and President of MEPs Against Cancer Group, but also as a cancer survivor, I would like to share with you my main concerns.*

*The fact is that cancer is still developing much faster than we respond to it. Cancer is not just a health issue, it is also a social and political issue and requires action at all levels. It is fundamental that we are celebrating thirty years of European Action Against Cancer this year and it is also ten years since the MEPs Against Cancer Group was established. In the European Parliament, this is the only parliamentary forum to bring together policy makers from across the political spectrum, across Europe to discuss various aspects of European cancer policy. MAC group has fought tirelessly against the scorch of cancer. Now we need third-term: The MAC group plays a vital role in ensuring cancer remains high on the political agenda. We gather input and exchange views with the MEP, experts, Commission officials, researchers, representatives of patients and relevant organisations. We do this in collaboration with our Secretariat, NGO, the association of European Cancer Leagues.*

*In the current legislator, the strategic roles of the MP's Europeans Against Cancer group are to reduce cancer incidence by promoting prevention, reduce mortality by ensuring equitable access to high quality treatment and care and ensure a good quality of life for the cancer patients and survivors. My vision as President of MACs is to form MAC groups in National Parliaments across the twenty-eight EU Member States.*

*Daily reality of cancer patients and professionals is shaped by health policy and you can play an increasingly active role in Member States cancer care prevention and control. The Initiative on Breast Cancer is an example where the principles of sustainability, continuity and transparent inclusion of experts and stakeholders are incorporated into the European project aiming to ensure and harmonise quality of breast cancer services across European countries.*

*I believe that ECIBC will prove successful, not only by reporting on the status of the developing process of the European guidelines for screening and diagnosis in breast cancer and the European quality assurance scheme for breast cancer services, but also by showing the compatibility and coordination within the overall EU policy on cancer under DG SANTE policy leadership and the Commission Expert Group on Cancer Control Monitoring.*

*Let me underline that is our duty to work together in order to develop and implement a comprehensive and continuous cancer control programme to protect our citizens and lower their cancer risk as much as possible. One pillar of this is health promotion, enabling the people to increase control over and to improve their health to reduce the inflow of new patients. Another pillar is prevention: we have the knowledge of the life style changes needed to reduce the risk of cancer and the forums to raise awareness and spread this message. However, as always, financial support is needed. We must go above and beyond the three percent of national health care budgets currently spent on prevention to reduce costs in the long term. The EU has world class knowledge and research centres, like Joint Research Centre in Ispra, and we should utilise the resources we have better!*

*I am pleased that JRC has the scientific and technical responsibility for the ECIBC and that coordinates its implementation, ensuring the synchronisation of all objectives and the delivery of quality outputs in a timely way. Close coordination and collaboration will prove to be essential to ensure the success of the initiative. The ECIBC is the case where our efforts are in hands in the fight against cancer with strong European leadership engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and member states.*

*Thank you for your attention and my best wishes for a successful plenary.*