

Brussels, 25 March 2025

Subject: Vice President Sberna Addresses the SILVANUS International Conference

Good morning everyone and thank you for your invitation.

Institutional commitments are keeping me elsewhere, but I wanted to leave you a written message to acknowledge the value of your contribution to a topic of fundamental importance.

Projects like SILVANUS, for which I congratulate you, highlight the need to provide innovative responses and tools to those who take care of the land every day — operators, local authorities, mountain communities, and all those involved in the sustainable management of our natural heritage.

The ultimate goal is always to turn knowledge into action. Our forests are not only a natural heritage to be protected, but also a strategic pillar of our ecosystems and production chains.

The challenges ahead must be tackled in an integrated way, by designing policies that reduce risks, increase prevention and modelling, and invest in optimized forest environment management.

Fires no longer have seasons — they now strike everywhere, even in places that, until a few years ago, we did not consider vulnerable.

Hence the need for a European approach to the issue and the will to adopt a common Strategy that provides a political framework to manage and protect European forests, improve their ecosystem services, ensure livelihoods, particularly in rural areas, and contribute to our bioeconomy.

Behind every fire, there are lives at risk, homes evacuated, farming businesses brought to their knees, ecosystems destroyed in just a few hours. There is, therefore, a need to act earlier, better, and faster.

We are investing heavily in climate resilience, and this is positive. Adaptation and mitigation measures are now essential.

At the same time, today's technology offers us extraordinary tools to map, monitor, and prevent. I am convinced that nowadays we can do more thanks to artificial intelligence, geographic information systems (GIS), drones, digital monitoring platforms, and so on. This includes the introduction of systems that integrate technology and innovation, such as precision forestry, which allows the connection of devices, machines, and systems through smart networks, automating the sustainable management and monitoring of forests.

These technologies not only help maximize forest productivity while reducing the environmental impact of forestry activities, but also make it possible to collect large volumes of forest data that can then be analysed and used to better define policies and interventions.

However, active land management cannot be centralized — it must be built together with regions, municipalities, forest services, and civil protection operators. Strategic alignment between Member States is essential, but we must never ignore the differences in territories, local economies, and forest management traditions that each country brings with it.

Looking to the future, I thank you once again for the work you have carried out with SILVANUS, and I hope it will be a useful contribution to our goals for transitioning towards a more balanced economy in the use of natural resources as well.

Thank you all, and let us continue this journey together with pragmatism and balance, showing due respect to territories and people.

Antonella Sberna
Vice Presidente del Parlamento Europeo