

Yangzhou Initiative for a Substantial and Dynamic ASEM

1. The ASEM Symposium on "Towards Peace and Prosperity in Asia and Europe: The Need of a Dynamic ASEM" was held in Yangzhou City, China, on 25 - 26 April 2013, as approved by the 9th ASEM Summit in Vientiane. This Symposium was a joint initiative by China, Lao PDR, India, Poland and ASEF and their summary of the discussions are as follows.

2. The Symposium gathered about 100 participants, including ASEM Senior Officials, government officials, experts and scholars from 40 ASEM members, and representatives from ASEF and the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat.

3. Participants underscored the strategic significance of ASEM in the context of growing economic globalization and multilateralism. The expansion of ASEM members from 26 in 1996 to 51 illustrates its attractiveness and vigor. ASEM has provided a unique platform for dialogue and cooperation between Asia and Europe in the three pillars of political dialogue, economic cooperation and socio-cultural exchanges, and has contributed to enhancing mutual understanding and friendship, promoting peace and development both regionally and globally. Asia and Europe are both important forces in the global political and economic landscape, with their economies highly complementary and increasingly interdependent. The relations between Asia and Europe have achieved great progress, and the political will on cooperation has been further strengthened through the dialogue in ASEM. ASEM is now faced with new opportunities for its future development.

4. In the presentations and discussions, participants highlighted the main challenges facing ASEM, such as the need to rebalance the development of the three-pillar cooperation, strengthening in particular the economic

cooperation; improve follow-up actions and deliverables; encourage better coordination and support so as to enhance efficiency and effectiveness; promote public awareness and visibility of the ASEM process; foster a communication strategy and enhance media exposure.

5. Participants discussed and put forward the Yangzhou Initiative as follows:

1) Highlight the role of ASEM from a long-term perspective, reiterate political commitment to engage with the ASEM process, and maintain the momentum of ASEM cooperation.

2) Uphold and implement the fundamental principles established by ASEM Summits.

3) Promote the three pillars of ASEM cooperation in a balanced manner:

--While maintaining the characteristics of informality, networking and flexibility, members should make ASEM more pragmatic, effective and result-oriented, and more relevant to members' economic and social development.

--Encourage members to propose and implement attractive, targeted and pragmatic initiatives of cooperation that meet members' needs of development, in accordance with the Asia-Europe Cooperation Framework 2000 (AECF) .

--Relaunch and revitalize such cooperation mechanisms as the ASEM Economic Ministers' Meeting and other sectoral ministerial meetings.

--Use ASEM as a platform to launch new ideas by combining and sharing expertise in various fields of practical cooperation for mutual benefit. Use ASEM for capacity building across sectors.

4) While an inter-governmental dialogue mechanism, ASEM should also enhance interaction with other segments in society such as parliamentarians, local governments, business and industry, academia, and other stakeholders. ASEM should improve dialogue and interaction with AEPF, AEBF and ASEP. ASEM could also benefit from the interface between think tanks in Asia and Europe.

5) Improve ASEM's working methods and efficiency.

--Streamline ASEM's meeting agenda with a focus on those issues that resonate most amongst the members.

--Set aside one or two plenary session(s) for Leaders/Foreign Ministers to focus on one or two issues for a more in-depth and focused discussion to add value to the ASEM dialogue.

--Introduce a retreat format at ASEM Summits, Foreign Ministers' Meetings and Senior Officials' Meetings to provide opportunities for more intensive and interactive dialogue.

--Rationalize the outcome documents. Replace the Chair's Statement by an uncontentious factual, concise and consensual statement, developed in consultation with members. Such a statement should be readable to the press and the public.

--ASEM SOM at the beginning of every year identify a set of issues, each of which could have a group of countries as co-sponsors for enhancing project related cooperation between ASEM countries.

--The Chair's Statement should also take note of these tangible projects for cooperation, and each group of countries, co-sponsors to specific issues and related projects should prepare status notes on the progress under the concerned projects. These documents should be part of the set of outcome documents to an ASEM meeting.

--ASEM members could agree to a formal thematic declaration on a priority area, which takes into account prior statements made in related ASEM technical meetings and could be agreed among Senior Officials in advance of Summits.

--Promote the development of issue-based leadership of different areas of cooperation.

--Establish a cooperation 'matrix' by the time of ASEM10, formed on the basis of summits' and ministerial meetings outcomes for monitoring of decisions implementation.

--Enhance the coordinating role of ASEM Senior Officials through varied approaches and forms. ASEM Senior Officials should effectively use their time and efforts to suggesting a more pragmatic agenda, indentifying desired deliverables and overseeing the implementation of decisions and activities.

--Support the ASEM Chairman Support Group and Coordinators to play a greater role in supporting the chairs of the Summits and FMMs.

--Further implement the *Helsinki Declaration on the Future of ASEM*.

- Strengthen coordination with Technical Ministers' meetings.
- 6) Raise visibility and public awareness of ASEM.
- Develop a public communication strategy.
 - Utilize modern technologies and social media to strengthen ASEM public communication.
 - Actively disseminate the outcomes of ASEM summits, other meetings and initiatives, including publicity through the ASEM Infoboard.
 - Facilitate public access to ASEM activities.
 - Finesse ASEM messages so that they can better resonate with the public.
- 7) Support the work of Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), ASEM's only permanent established institution, based on its founding principles.
- Support ASEF to fully perform its functions under the *Dublin Agreed Principles*.
 - Focus on ASEF's financial sustainability and predictability.
 - Support ASEF to establish closer linkage with the ASEM process.
 - Compile ASEM documents and ASEM calendar of activities and maintain the institutional memory of ASEM.
 - Use ASEF's existing resources to promote ASEF and ASEM, in particular through the ASEM Infoboard and www.ASEF.org.
 - Strengthen ASEM Infoboard as a pragmatic tool for providing information.
- 8) Celebrate the 20th anniversary of ASEM in 2016 by taking stock of ASEM cooperation during the past two decades and defining its future direction.
6. The Yangzhou Initiative will be reported to the next Senior Officials' Meeting.