



Asia-Europe Meeting

Concept Paper

ASEM Think-tank Symposium

Connectivity: Opportunity to Boost ASEM Cooperation

22-23 July, 2014, Shanghai, China

(Co-sponsored by China, Mongolia, Singapore and Poland)

Background

At the 9th ASEM Summit in 2012 in Laos, ASEM Leaders "*stressed the importance of strengthening regional connectivity to support economic integration, including through sub-regional initiatives and frameworks, in narrowing development gaps and boosting sustainable development within and amongst the sub-regions in Asia and Europe*".

Connectivity is literally the inherent character of ASEM vision about bridging Asia and Europe and has been one of the focused areas of the three pillars of cooperation. Trade Facilitation Action Plan and Investment Promotion Action Plan have been formulated and Trans-Eurasia Information Network established at the ASEM level. Ambitious declarations and plans have also been adopted and implemented at regional level to improve intra-regional hard and soft infrastructure. These efforts are among major determinants of the successful stories of the social and economic development in both Asia and Europe.

At the 11th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting in 2013, Chinese Foreign Minister Mr. Wang Yi proposed more research and exchanges on connectivity by ASEM think-tanks. During the SOM meeting held in April this year, ASEM partners agreed to have connectivity as a major topic of the upcoming 10th ASEM Summit in October. In this context, China will hold a 2-day ASEM Think-tank Symposium on Connectivity on 22-23 July 2014 in Shanghai.

Objectives

The symposium is intended to provide a platform for ASEM think-tanks to share and exchange valuable findings and draw on experts' knowledge and insights to explore ways to enhance ASEM connectivity. It aims to:

- Assess the current situation of connectivity within ASEM space; highlight the needs for and benefits of mainstreaming cooperation on connectivity in the ASEM process;
- Review and analyze key opportunities and challenges for raising the effectiveness and quality of connectivity; brainstorm up recommendations to facilitate policy-making and strategy coordination at national, sub-regional and regional levels;
- Raise awareness of governments, relevant stakeholders and general public so as to improve regulatory and social environment for cooperation;
- Strengthen research partnerships and facilitate networking among interested think-tanks; encourage joint research in order to provide intellectual support for promotion of ASEM connectivity.

The discussions including views, ideas, proposals, or initiatives put forward shall be reflected into a chair's statement as outcome of the symposium, which will be presented at the ASEM SOM and possibly later feed into the 10th ASEM Summit

Theme and Topics

The theme of the symposium will be *Connectivity: Opportunity to Boost ASEM Cooperation*. The topics are as follows:

Topic 1 — Connectivity and ASEM. To take stock of the current cooperation under the framework of ASEM and discuss on the role connectivity could play to increase the vigor and vitality of the ASEM process. To explore feasibility of mainstreaming cooperation on connectivity in ASEM to trigger collaboration in broader areas and its multi-dimensional impacts on regional development.

Topic 2 — Opportunities and challenges. To share views on favorable or restricting factors for efforts to forge regional connectivity. The variety of members with unique but complementary advantages creates challenges as well as huge potential for trade and economic integration through increased connectivity. Diversity of members in stages of development, national capacities, political regimes, available resources, cultural background may lead to divergent concerns and policy orientation. The impact of geopolitical situation should not be neglected.

Topic 3 — The way forward. To identify priority areas or projects for concrete cooperation that can deliver tangible results, especially those more likely to produce early harvest. It is hoped that discussion shall include both hardware side of connectivity such as roads, bridges, electrical grids, and software side such as customs codes, trade and investment facilitation, regulatory regimes coordination. Participants are expected to make concrete recommendations on how to effectively promote infrastructure development, trade and investment, people-to-people communication, policy coordination to generate joint action.

Topic 4 — Role of think-tanks. To look into the possibility that ASEM think-tanks

conduct joint research, initiate platform or network of experts so as to share study results, information and ideas. To come up with ideas to enhance think-tank involvement in policy-making and formulation of regional strategies on connectivity.

Co-Sponsors

All interested ASEM members

Participation

Around 60-80 representatives from ASEM members are expected to attend the symposium, including professors, experts, specialists, researchers from research institutes, universities, international institutions/organizations and other think-tanks.

Format

The symposium will be a two-day meeting and may include a half day cultural excursion on voluntary basis.

Date and Venue

- **Venue:** Hongqiao State Guests Hotel, Shanghai, China
- **Dates:** 22-23 July, 2014

Costs

The host will cover the organizing costs. Keynote speakers will be provided with financial support to cover the international travel fees and accommodation in China. Other participants are requested to cover their own travel and accommodation expenses.

Language

The working language will be English.

Organizer

Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (SIIS)

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