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REMARKS

Remarks by High Representative/ Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the Opening Ceremony of the 12th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Luxembourg, 5 November 2015

Your Royal Highness, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;
Dear colleagues, Foreign Ministers from Europe and from Asia,

I would like first of all to thank Luxembourg, who holds the rotating European Union Presidency these 6 months, for being our generous host for the 12th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

Let me welcome you all to this meeting. The title of our gathering in these two days is: 'Working together for a sustainable and secure future.' And a less formal "thank you" to everyone. Because if you are here, if we are here, it is because we believe that our future is at stake, our common future. We all believe that indeed we need to build our future together, and we can do it.

Let us keep something in mind. Around this table we see the foreign ministers and delegations of 51 European and Asian countries, as well as of the European Union and ASEAN Secretariat. We represent all together here 60% of the world's population, GDP and international trade. Together. This forum hosts big and small countries, young democracies and thousand-years old civilizations. When it comes to bilateral affairs, we might not always be 100% united, and we know that. But when it comes to global challenges, we all know we need each other. All of us, small countries and superpowers alike.

'Together' is the key word of our meeting. It should also be – and sometimes it is – the key word of international relations.

Over the next day and half we will be discussing global issues, which are relevant for both our continents and are relevant for the entire world: climate change, sustainable development, the management of natural disasters. We have a great chance here, today and tomorrow, to build on the Sustainable Development Summit and to prepare the United Nations Climate Change Conference in a few weeks. We can and should underline our commitments towards a successful COP 21 in Paris.

On my way from Brussels yesterday, I've thought at length of what unites Europe and Asia. History is indeed part of the answer – a difficult history at times. And cultural exchanges, dating back thousand years. But above all, the answer relates to our peoples. People moving.

Our countries and continents have always been connected and are becoming more and more inter-connected. Connectivity, we hear this word so many times. It shouldn't be just a slogan. Building networks, infrastructures for better connections between Europe and Asia, and within our regions – this is the task of our era.

But please let us avoid a fundamental mistake: connectivity can't be only about goods. It is also and mainly about people, people on the move.

Opportunities: this is what we need to build. This means education, development, rights, democracy. For our generation and for the next ones. People are what makes our societies rich. And preserving such richness is our duty and our responsibility. We owe it to our fathers and mothers, and to our children. Actually, this is something we need to work on together with our children.

This is why I am particularly pleased that two Young Leaders will speak right after me. They took part in the ASEF Young Leaders' Summit and I had the pleasure to meet them yesterday already and to listen to them. Their strength is our hope. But politicians and persons that like us hold institutional roles have a duty to turn hope into reality, we have a duty to work for the sake of our citizens and of the citizens of the whole world, for this generation and the following ones. And – apologies if I insist – we must do it together.

During my first year in office, I had the pleasure to pay five visits to Asia, I attended three bilateral Summits with Asian partners, I attended the Shangri-La dialogue and the ASEAN Regional Forum last summer in Kuala Lumpur. And I met with many Asian colleagues in the sidelines of international events. What I've seen is great respect for our European Union, despite all the limits we have and of which we are aware.

We are learning to cooperate on everything, from the easy to the most difficult issues: from migration to counter terrorism, from trade to our common values and our common objectives – among us and with Asia. We all look at Asia with great interest, with respect and with a desire for stronger partnerships. In most cases we don't share borders, but we do share the same concerns -and the same interest and objective- about the current crises, from Syria to Libya, to the global threat posed by terrorism and radicalisation.

My meetings confirmed the need for regular and frequent contacts, and - let me says so- for candid discussions, for real ones. And these include security cooperation. Asia is at very heart of Europe Union's external policy, and I believe Europe can be a partner for you, my Asian friends, when dealing with your regional issues, not only in the economic field but in many others such as foreign and security.

Your Royal Highness, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have an important meeting ahead of us, with challenging discussions on the agenda. We have a chance to show the true value of ASEM as a forum for dialogue and cooperation between Europe and Asia. Our leaders will meet again next year in Ulaanbaatar in Mongolia, to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Asia-Europe Meeting. In 1996 only 25 of us sat at the table. Today we are 53. Our future from now to 2036 is in our hands. I wish us all a very fruitful meeting work today and tomorrow to prepare our common future.

Link to the video:

<http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?ref=I111498>

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