

Second ASEM Culture Ministers' Meeting in Paris

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

June 2005

The Second Meeting of ASEM Culture Ministers was held in Paris on June 7th and 8th 2005. This meeting focused on the following theme: "Cultural diversity: opportunities and challenges - ASEM's long-term plan". The meeting was attended by delegations from 36 countries and the European Commission, civil society members and the Asia-Europe Foundation.

The Ministers' proceedings came as a follow-up to:

- the 2002 Copenhagen ASEM Summit of Heads of State and Government, which encouraged the promotion of dialogue among cultures and civilizations,
- the First Meeting of ASEM Culture Ministers in Beijing in December 2003, with the theme "Unity in Diversity",
- the 2004 Hanoi ASEM Summit, which called for the development of a long-term plan on promoting dialogue among civilizations and stepping up cultural exchanges and cooperation between Asia and Europe.

The meeting enabled ASEM Culture Ministers to identify many points of common interest between Europe and Asia for the protection and promotion of cultural diversity; the Ministers outlined a set of priorities as set out in the appended action plan.

Dialogue and cooperation among cultures and civilizations are some of the best ways to further understanding and tolerance among peoples. They help to avoid misunderstandings due to ideological, economic and cultural differences. Mistrust and ignorance among cultures and civilizations can be the source of tensions undermining peace in the world.

Given the richness, diversity and long history of their respective cultures, Europe and Asia, determined to promote unity in diversity, are particularly committed to developing dialogue among their cultures and to protecting and promoting cultural diversity in order to meet positively new globalization-related challenges.

With this in mind, ASEM Culture Ministers underlined the importance of discussions carried out at UNESCO with a view to adopting an international convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions. They expressed their wish that ASEM help enable that convention to work effectively towards protecting and promoting cultural diversity.

As a follow-up to the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity adopted by UNESCO in 2001 and the Declaration on Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations adopted by ASEM Heads of State and Government in Hanoi in October 2004, the Ministers reaffirmed their determination to recognise the distinctive nature of cultural activities, goods and services, to reaffirm the sovereign right for States to maintain, adopt and implement policies and measures aimed at protecting and promoting cultural diversity, to develop international

cooperation, particularly in favour of developing countries to ensure wider and balanced cultural exchanges, and foster diversity of cultural expressions.

ASEM Culture Ministers have widely expressed their satisfaction that mutual supportiveness, complementarity and non-subordination be respected for governing the Convention's relations with other treaties, and that effective mechanisms for the monitoring and settlement of disputes be encouraged.

They welcomed the outcome of the 3rd intergovernmental meeting of experts recommending the adoption of the preliminary draft convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions at the 33rd session of the UNESCO General Conference in October 2005.

ASEM Culture Ministers explored the possible ways to step up cultural exchanges and cooperation between Europe and Asia. They encouraged interactions among Asia and Europe at all levels. They adopted an action plan to this end.

They underpinned their interest in developing, in their two continents, cultural industries that have the means to assert themselves on a local and global level. They reiterated their commitment to ensure effective protection of intellectual property.

They affirmed their belief that culture is an important development factor. They underlined the significance of cultural exchanges and cooperation between developing and developed countries in concretising sustainable development.

They also stressed that the enhancement of heritage and of sustainable and responsible cultural tourism can play an important role in development as well as in fostering intercultural knowledge and understanding.

ASEM Culture Ministers acknowledged the significant role that the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) plays in developing dialogue between European and Asian civil societies and between the latter and public authorities. The ASEM Culture Ministers agreed to strengthen a favourable and sustainable environment for these initiatives to develop, so that they contribute to the framing of public policies in favour of cultural diversity.

ASEM Culture Ministers would like ASEF to develop its activities in the cultural field in line with the priorities they have chosen in developing and promoting dialogue and better mutual understanding between the peoples of Asia and Europe through interactions among cultural, intellectual and civil societies.

States must show their commitment through active participation in ASEM activities and programmes so that ASEM can be an effective forum between Europe and Asia. European and Asian ASEM Culture Ministers have committed to this undertaking.

ASEM Culture Ministers welcomed Malaysia's offer to host the Third ASEM Culture Ministers Meeting in 2007, and Poland's offer to host the Fourth ASEM Culture Ministers Meeting, bound to constitute a new step forward in dialogue among cultures and civilizations.

Annex to the Chairman's Statement

ACTION PLAN OF CULTURE MINISTERS

The ASEM Culture ministers decided to pursue following action plan:

1. To propose to the Head of States and Governments at the next Summit hosted by Finland, in 2006, that ASEM Culture ministers meet regularly from now on, in order to follow up the plans and programmes decided at Beijing in December 2003 and Paris in June 2005, over the long term. Their next meetings could be combined with meetings of artists and cultural events. They suggested also that Culture Senior Officials could meet regularly in order to ensure the follow-up of the Action Plan and its related activities.
2. To welcome Malaysia's offer to host the next ASEM Culture Ministers Meeting in 2007 and Poland's proposition to host the fourth one.
3. To appoint, within the existing structures, Cultural Permanent Points of Contact - modelled on the ASEM Permanent Points of Contacts existing in foreign affairs ministries - to link their relevant administrations and to encourage flows of expertise.
4. To contribute to the adoption, at the 33rd UNESCO's General Conference in October 2005, of the Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions.
5. To further enhance networking amongst professionals in the cultural and audiovisual fields through existing professional networks. Major events, exhibitions and fairs will be leveraged on to set the platform for meetings.
6. To promote exchanges and foster circulation in the areas of performances, exhibitions, literary works and audiovisual programmes between European and Asian countries.
7. To recognize the appeal of festivals and major events presenting the culture of a European country in Asia or vice versa, and to elaborate calendar of events.
8. To recognize the important role of the media and civil society, especially of cultural organizations, in promoting cultural diversity and dialogue amongst civilizations.
9. To facilitate the development of coproductions and cooperations between theatres, art centres, museums, publishers, audiovisual operators, as well as that of artist residences and training courses for young professionals to be organized on a reciprocal basis.
10. To encourage initiatives aimed at promoting understanding of the diverse cultures of partner countries particularly among the younger generation.
11. To encourage participation in cultural activities organized at ASEM Summits.
12. To pay special attention to projects regarding sustainable and responsible cultural tourism as well as the promotion of culture as a development factor.
13. To maintain the balance between enhancement and conservation of cultural resources, including the sites and monuments, as a factor of a sustainable cultural tourism.
14. To recognise the need to harness information and communication technologies to promote greater dialogue and cooperation among cultures and civilisations. The Ministers further recognise ASEF's efforts to develop the ASEM Cultural Portal to serve as a gateway to Asia-Europe cultural engagement, to enhance access to cultural information and to create greater mobility in the cultural field by providing multi-disciplinary and real-time information. Ministers support continuing efforts and investigations by ASEF leading to the creation of the ASEM Cultural Portal.

15. To rely on current structures for dialogue and cooperation. Within its remit and the limits of its resources, the Asia-Europe Foundation, which has developed for more than 8 years flagship programmes in the fields of young artists exchanges and contemporary artistic practices (such as photography, new media arts, choreography, music), independent cinema (e.g. SEA Images network), museums (e.g. ASEMUS), Dialogue on Policy and Culture, Dialogue on Cultures and Civilisations, and People to People exchanges, will participate in developing these projects and exploring these themes.