

DECLARATION OF THE FOURTH ASIA-EUROPE PARLIAMENTARY PARTNERSHIP MEETING (ASEP IV)

Helsinki, Finland, 4 - 5 May 2006

1. The Fourth Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting (ASEP IV) was held in Helsinki on 4-5 May 2006. At the invitation of Mr Paavo Lipponen, Speaker of the Parliament of Finland, parliamentarians from ASEM member countries and the European Parliament attended the Meeting. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the European Commission, the Asia-Europe Foundation, the Asia-Europe Business Forum and the Asia-Europe People's Forum were invited to attend the Meeting as Guests of the Host. (List of delegates available at www.asep4.fi)

Mr Matti Vanhanen, Prime Minister, addressed the Meeting as representative of the Government of Finland, and as the host of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM VI) to be held in Helsinki in September 2006.

2. Inaugurating the Meeting, Mr Paavo Lipponen, Speaker of Parliament, warmly welcomed the parliamentarians and guests to the Meeting.
3. ASEP Parliamentarians, recalling their previous Meetings in Strasbourg (1996), Manila (2002) and Hue City (2004), held comprehensive, in-depth and fruitful discussions on a wide range of issues of shared interest and concern. The year 2006 marks the tenth anniversary of Asia-Europe partnership through ASEM. ASEP Parliamentarians salute ASEM and its valuable work in its Tenth Year. The Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership also marks its tenth anniversary. ASEP Parliamentarians want to celebrate this tenth anniversary of closer Asia-Europe cooperation by forging a stronger link between ASEM and ASEP, thus strengthening the parliamentary dimension of the Asia-Europe partnership.

International Cooperation and Multilateralism

4. ASEP Parliamentarians express their common view that multilateral cooperation and strong international institutions remain the basis for developing international cooperation. Working through the United Nations and developing regional and inter-regional cooperation is crucial to world peace, security and the harmonious development of international relations.
5. ASEP parliamentarians emphasize their commitment to a strong, open, transparent and fair trading system. ASEP parliamentarians agreed to renew their call to ASEM to contribute to the successful conclusion of the Doha Development Agenda. WTO agreements need to ensure an ambitious, balanced and feasible liberalization agenda. Both Asia and Europe have a crucial stake in ensuring that the world economic system develops in a balanced fashion to ensure fair globalisation, which brings benefits to all, and to foster economic competitiveness both in Asia and Europe.

Strengthening the Asia-Europe Partnership

6. ASEP Parliamentarians underline the fundamental importance of developing closer ties between Asia and Europe as a crucial pillar in the global system. ASEM provides an important linkage between these regions and should be further developed. ASEP Parliamentarians note that economic ties – trade and investment - between Asia and Europe are deepening at an ever growing pace and should be complemented by developing a more comprehensive political dialogue, promoting and restoring human rights, furthering cultural exchanges and developing mutual understanding and action over common problems facing humanity, inter alia development, security and the environment.
7. The economic inter-connectedness of Asia and Europe is growing at an ever increasing pace. ASEP Parliamentarians underscore that economic integration and exchanges need to be complemented by deepening political cooperation in addressing issues of common interest. Transport and logistics between Asia and Europe can be further strengthened by also developing land-links between Asia and Europe. Energy policy – both production and conservation - should also have a more prominent role in Asia-Europe cooperation.
8. ASEP Parliamentarians underscore that further efforts should be made to achieve closer ASEM Economic Partnership. ASEM governments should engage the business community and the Asia-Europe Business Forum more directly in the strengthening of economic cooperation between Asia and Europe.
9. ASEP Parliamentarians emphasize that the world is indivisible and interdependent. Persistent imbalances exist in development, prosperity, social and normative conditions, resources and environmental circumstances. These imbalances are not sustainable in the long run and further efforts should be made by the international community, regional cooperation and states themselves to address these imbalances between regions, states and within countries.
10. ASEP Parliamentarians underline the fact that the security agenda, relevant to today's world and also pertinent to Asia-Europe Cooperation, is wider than ever and needs to focus on issues that are predominantly non-military by nature. These wider security concerns, so called new threats, include issues like global pandemics, communicable diseases, natural disasters, illegal migration, terrorism, human trafficking and transnational organised crime at large. Open societies are increasingly vulnerable to these new threats and ASEP Parliamentarians emphasize the fact that increasing international cooperation is the best way to deal with these new threats and call on ASEM to take a proactive approach in dealing with this security agenda.

Climate Change and Economic Implications

11. The environment is indivisible and its preservation is crucial to the international community at large. ASEP Parliamentarians had a thorough discussion on climate change and international efforts to address it. ASEP Parliamentarians emphasize that climate change is an undisputed fact and underlined that all countries should act with resolve and urgency to meet the shared and multiple objectives of reducing

greenhouse gas emissions, improving the global environment, and dealing with air pollution in conjunction with their resolute efforts to reduce poverty.

12. ASEP Parliamentarians underline that multilateral agreements, especially the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Kyoto Protocol, are indispensable tools in addressing climate change and call for the substantial development of international efforts to tackle climate change and urge all partners to contribute to these efforts. ASEP Parliamentarians took note of the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment. ASEP Parliamentarians underscore the importance of attaining inclusive international agreements over climate change and the efforts to address it. ASEP Parliamentarians encourage the ASEM Summit to produce a declaration on climate change and the international community's efforts to address it.
13. ASEP Parliamentarians recognize the fact that all countries have a right to economic development. Therefore, sustainable development needs major and sustained efforts to promote economic growth within the carrying capacity of ecosystems by addressing and, where appropriate, de-linking economic growth from environmental degradation through improving efficiency and sustainability in the use of resources. ASEP Parliamentarians also recognised that improved energy security and access to reliable, affordable, and environmentally sound energy services contribute to the eradication of poverty as called for in the Millennium Development Goals. Developed countries should take the lead in furthering sustainable development and assisting developing countries both financially and technically with this aim.

Education and Mobility – Asia-Europe Cultural Exchange

14. ASEP Parliamentarians emphasize that cultural diversity is an invaluable asset in international relations. ASEP Parliamentarians had a thorough discussion on education and mobility, including cultural exchanges in the Asia-Europe Context. Cultural exchanges, including dialogue among cultures and civilizations and interfaith dialogue, should play an important role in Asia-Europe cooperation and international cooperation at large. ASEP Parliamentarians call for a further development of a common cultural space and takes favourable note of the Action Plan of ASEM Culture Ministers. ASEP Parliamentarians acknowledge the significant role of the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) in furthering this aim.
15. ASEP Parliamentarians recognise and appreciate the fact that direct links between non-governmental organizations and civil society groups can contribute to furthering a dialogue among cultures and civilizations, and with this aim in mind, ask the ASEM governments to strengthen the role of the Asia-Europe People's Forum (AEPF).
16. ASEP Parliamentarians recognise the importance of mobility – of people, ideas and labour - between Asia and Europe in developing a lasting basis for a mutually beneficial Asia-Europe partnership. Education and Research should be vanguards of mobility between Asia and Europe. ASEP Parliamentarians emphasize the value of young people's exchanges – in universities, companies and public administration – as a future bridge between Asia and Europe, and believe that further efforts should be put in developing youth exchange programmes as well as in developing

a closer cooperation between the Asia-Europe Young Parliamentarians Meeting and ASEP.

17. ASEP Parliamentarians call on ASEM to task ASEM Education Ministers to develop an ambitious and concrete action plan on furthering exchange programmes for youth and young professionals – both professional and educational – and in higher education and research to be presented to the ASEM VII meeting. Asia-Europe should have an ambitious student exchange program in the fashion of Europe's Erasmus-programme and dedicated ASEM-scholarships to encourage student and academic exchanges between Asia and Europe. ASEP Parliamentarians underline that these exchanges should also foster a more widespread study of Asian languages and culture in Europe and European languages and culture in Asia. ASEP Parliamentarians are convinced of the fundamental importance of youth and educational exchanges as a foundation for a closer and mutually beneficial Asia-Europe cooperation. With this aim in mind, ASEP Parliamentarians, endorsing the joint proposal of the National Assembly of Vietnam and the European Parliament, extend ASEP's support to the series of European Higher Education Fairs being organized by the European Commission and EU member states in successive Asian capitals and call on European and Asian students and scholars to take an active part in their organization.

Developing the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership

18. ASEP warmly welcome parliamentarians from new ASEM members to the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership. New members add to the already substantial weight and importance of ASEM on the global stage, in terms of economic and political weight, trade and population. ASEP Parliamentarians believe that interparliamentary dialogue between Asia and Europe can provide new avenues for dialogue in inter alia development, security issues, human rights, trade issues and energy policies.
19. With the aim of substantiating the Asia-Europe Partnership, ASEP Parliamentarians adopted Rules of Procedure for Asia-Europe Parliamentary Meetings. ASEP Parliamentarians are grateful to the National Assembly of Vietnam for presiding over the preparatory work of drafting these rules of procedure. ASEP Parliamentarians believe that these rules of procedure provide a clear basis for organising ASEP work.
20. ASEP Parliamentarians emphasize that the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership should retain its informal nature, in order to facilitate a direct and flexible dialogue between ASEP parliamentarians. With this end in mind, ASEP Parliamentarians find it important that the ASEP work between ASEP meetings also in the future is presided over and organised by the host parliament of the upcoming ASEP meeting, with the kind support of ASEP member parliaments.
21. ASEP Parliamentarians emphasize the link between parliaments of Asia and Europe and ASEM. ASEP needs to make an active parliamentary contribution to the ASEM process and in particular to Summit Meetings. With this aim in mind, ASEP Parliamentarians endorse the principle that ASEP Meetings should be held bi-annually before ASEM Summit Meetings. The parliament of the ASEM member state hosting the ASEM Summit shall have a priority to host the ASEP meeting the

same year, in order to provide for a direct link between ASEP and ASEM Summit preparations.

22. ASEP Parliamentarians deem it important that in the future the ASEP President always communicates the ASEP Declaration to the ASEM Summit. ASEP Parliamentarians encouraged the host of the ASEM VI Summit, the Prime Minister of Finland, to invite the President of ASEP IV to address the ASEM VI Summit in Helsinki.
23. The ASEP IV delegates expressed their gratitude to the Parliament of Finland for organising the ASEP IV meeting and to Speaker Paavo Lipponen for presiding over the meeting.
24. The ASEP parliamentarians noted with appreciation the intention of the National People's Congress of China to host ASEP V and look forward to meeting in China in the first half of 2008.
25. The ASEP parliamentarians took note that the functions of the President of the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership will be transferred from the Speaker of the Finnish Parliament to the President of the National People's Congress of China with the closing of the ASEM VI meeting in September 2006, as provided in the rules of procedure of Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meetings.

Helsinki, 5 May 2006