

Asia and Europe against coronavirus: the most vulnerable must be protected

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“The virus does not distinguish between continents, borders, nationalities or ethnicities”. In the first ministerial statement on COVID-19 embracing the two continents, Foreign Ministers from Asia and Europe stress the transboundary nature of the pandemic and the interconnectedness between their countries. Those in vulnerable situations must be protected, including tackling violence against women and children. The pandemic should not be allowed to increase stigmatization, nor worsen existing inequality.

At a time when the world is facing an unparalleled global health crisis, causing major disruptions to the global economy, the Host and Regional Coordinators of the 13th ASEM Summit, a major political platform where Asia and Europe meet, recognise that combating the COVID-19 pandemic requires concerted international cooperation, global solidarity as well as transparent and timely sharing of accurate information. They condemn the act of spreading fake news and manipulated misinformation. Extensive immunization against COVID-19 is a “global public good for health”.

Welcoming the adoption of the 73rd World Health Assembly Resolution on COVID-19 in its entirety, the ministers support the importance of the World Health Organization in coordinating the health response to the virus. Government responses to the pandemic “should protect and not undermine human rights while focusing on saving lives and assuring the safety, well-being and livelihood of citizens”. No one should be left behind.

Tackling the pandemic requires strengthened multilateral cooperation to accelerate the development and delivery of vaccines, diagnostics and treatments, as well as facilitating open scientific research, innovation and technical cooperation among ASEM partners, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders including civil society.

ASEM partners’ pledging contributions towards the €15.9 billion raised by the Coronavirus Global Response and towards the US\$ 8.8 billion outcome for the Global Vaccines Summit were welcome. Additionally, the EU’s “Team Europe” package to support partner countries in their fight against COVID-19 worldwide reached almost €36 billion.

Anticipating the post-pandemic phase, the ministers commit to working together to accelerate sustainable socio-economic recovery, stimulate economic development and financial resilience, and minimise the potential of global economic recession by restoring growth, investments and sustainable connectivity. Disruption to international trade needs to be kept to the minimum while observing public health and safety considerations.

A sustainable inclusive post-COVID-19 recovery will include stepping up global actions based on the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, ahead of the upcoming UN Framework Convention on Climate Change – COP 26.

The statement was made by the foreign ministers of Cambodia as host of the 13th ASEM summit, the EU and Germany as regional coordinators of the European group, Singapore as the regional coordinator of the ASEAN group, and Russia as the regional coordinator of the Northeast and South Asia group, in consultation with the 51 participating ASEM partner countries from Europe and Asia.

ASEM Facts & Figures

ASEM is a unique, informal platform for political dialogue and cooperation between Asia and Europe launched in 1996. It brings together 53 partners, including 51 European and Asian countries, the EU, and the ASEAN Secretariat. ASEM partners represent together 55% of global trade, 60% of the global population, 60% of global. The ASEM summit takes place every two years, in Asia and in Europe alternatively, to set out the priorities of the partnership. Ministerial meetings are organized in between the ASEM summits.

For more than 20 years, ASEM has been the most comprehensive partnership between Asia and Europe, crossing hands across continents.

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EU High Representative Mr Josep Borrell's **[The crisis and Europe's responsibilities](#)**