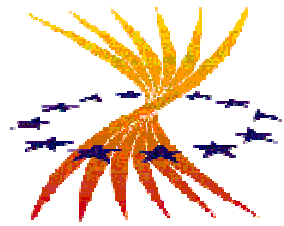




EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE GENERAL for EXTERNAL RELATIONS
Directorate H
Horizontal Matters – ASEM Counsellor



Vademecum

Modalities for Future ASEM Dialogue Taking the Process Forward



Brussels, July 18, 2001

Executive summary

Need to restore the informal dialogue in ASEM

Need for managing the Process

- Coordinators and Senior Officials should play the pivotal role together for managing the process and taking it forward
- A virtual secretariat could facilitate communication

Initiatives not an end in themselves

- Initiatives should be linked back to and supportive of the dialogue.
- Initiatives should be presented in clusters and should, to the extent possible, be supportive of other initiatives within the cluster

Interactive and informal Meetings

- The chair should be active and strive for interactivity
- Longer informal intervals
- Informal retreat sessions

ASEM added value at Meetings

- Focussed agenda with few topics
- No duplication within ASEM and with other fora
- Informal meetings around one single theme
- No issue excluded beforehand
- Consultation before meetings in international fora

Outcome of meetings

- Factual reports and political declarations instead of negotiated Chair Statements

Reaching the public

- The dialogue should be broadened to business, public, think tanks and other parts of the society
- One common ASEM logo should be used for all events to establish a corporate identity

1. Why reform the process?

ASEM has grown out of its first shoes now: The process is five years old. Three summits and nine ministerial meetings have been held.

When the ASEM process started in Bangkok in 1996, Leaders had in mind an informal high-level process with an open **exchange of views** on all issues, be they political or economic, social or cultural, either regional or global. The process was a result of the common view that strengthened relations are needed in a more and more globalised world and that Europe and Asia need to be connected (in)formally in the trilateral relationship between Europe-the Americas- (SE)Asia. Thus, ASEM is a child of globalisation.

ASEM's dialogue is a clear expression of one of its basic principles - **a partnership of equals**. Dialogue in contrast to negotiating is possible on an equal footing; in the negotiating context political and economic might plays a much larger role. In the political context meaningful dialogue is essential to prevent, manage and learn from crisis situations. Nowadays, the dialogue is no longer dominated by the donor-recipient relationship of the past. However, Asian and European partners do not yet share the same strong belief that dialogue is a necessary element in a (mature) relationship between partners and this difference in perception of the ASEM process sometimes has an impact on agenda setting. While Asian partners regard dialogue in itself as an achievement and prefer to talk about non-contentious issues, Europeans tend to press for tangible results and are interested to take up contentious issues in order to arrive at conclusions.

The initial ideas of an informal and candid dialogue have however vanished on the way: The more we see each other, the more formality and preparation seem to take place. We seem to have forgotten that the objective of ASEM is a high-level **dialogue**, not an institution, not a "regional United Nations" where Leaders need to go on record on political issues or other issues in reading out well prepared statements, without engaging with others. Dialogue in itself is a goal contributing to the unique character of the ASEM process. Our ministers and Leaders seem sometimes to be caught in a routine approach to international conferences: they read out prepared statements, sometimes even without realising that their intervention does not fit.... As a consequence, meetings become tedious presentations of regional views instead of attempts to interact.

Time is therefore ripe, as stated by Leaders in Seoul, to see how the process can be reformed to avoid a too formalised arrangement and to retrieve the special feature of ASEM as an **informal dialogue process which aims to be a catalyst for negotiated solutions in the context of relevant international or regional organisations or for finding bilateral solutions**.

At the recent Third Foreign Ministers Meeting (24-25 May 2001 in Beijing), several ASEM partners voiced these concerns, some more seem to concur tacitly. There is a high degree of consensus to reform the process: too much formality and established lists of speakers discourage interactive discussions. This work has already been initiated, with the adoption of a document on stocktaking, *attached*, which is pointing out a monitoring and review mechanism for initiatives as well as discussing how better to achieve synergies between initiatives.

The present Vademecum attempts to gather views expressed in order to assess what has been achieved so far, as a basis for further discussions of reform.

2. Role for Co-ordinators

To promote a smooth functioning, Coordinators together with Senior Officials should play the **pivotal role** for taking the process forward¹. As developed in the Stocktaking document, adopted at FMM III, Co-ordinators shall be entrusted to maintain a list of all endorsed ASEM initiatives, and to consolidate and assess information received from facilitators/sponsors of the various initiatives, in order to ensure that synergies are taken advantage of (more on this below) and that duplication is avoided. Based on this preparatory work, SOM should become more active in the management of the ASEM process, leaving policy discussions primarily to the political representatives (ministers, leaders).

The need for Coordinators is greater on the Asian than on the European side, and their work thus both more important – and more difficult. The European ASEM partners can rely on their institutional framework. Asian partners have to rely on *ad hoc* cooperation. This coordination may ultimately lead to deeper cooperation.

The comparatively low level of cooperation on the Asian side, or more precisely, between the ASEAN ASEM partners and the three northern neighbours, as well as among the latter, can partly be explained by geographical reasons: distances, archipelago states, partly by imbalance regarding the political and economic weight

All these factors contribute to making the role of Co-ordinators on the Asian side a difficult task. European partners must acknowledge this and see to that the needs for coordination are catered for, by granting enough time slots at meetings and by delivering European views well in time for consideration by Asian ASEM partners, for instance.

As recognised at the last Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) in Stockholm, a **Virtual Secretariat** could facilitate the communication among ASEM partners. The European Commission maintains a website (http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/asem/intro/index.htm) containing all official ASEM documents which could serve as the library of a Virtual Secretariat. Links with existing other ASEM related websites, such as ASEF², ASEM Invest Online (AIO)³, ASEMConnect⁴, the ASEM Resource Centre website on the Child Welfare Initiative⁵, websites of former summit organisers⁶ are already in place. The Steering Committee set up in Stockholm, mandated to develop a feasibility study, should develop concrete proposals in time for the next SOM, scheduled for early 2002 in Spain.

¹ The important role of coordinators is recognised in the AECF 2000, paragraph 22.

² <http://www.asef.org>

³ <http://europa.eu.int/aio>

⁴ <http://www.asemconnect.com.sg>

⁵ <http://www.asem.org/>

⁶ <http://www.asem3.org>

3. Synergies between initiatives

While ASEM initiatives are an important part of the visible output of the ASEM process, they must be linked back to, and supportive of, the ASEM dialogue. The role of ASEM initiatives is to help further the dialogue, not the other way around; they are not an end in itself.

Nevertheless, initiatives must be perceived to be effective so that the process as a whole is well received by the public. Peer review and peer pressure based on agreed reporting schemes, like in the context of the two economic action plans (Trade Facilitation Action Plan-TFAP, Investment Promotion Action Plan-IPAP), is the working method of ASEM.

A **consolidated work programme** with the exploitation of possible synergies would facilitate an easy overview of ASEM initiatives and enable ASEM partners to build on expertise already acquired. Therefore, the presentation of endorsed initiatives, should be made in **clusters**, as initiated at the Third Summit and foreseen in AECF 2000⁷. Facilitators for initiatives within clusters should be aware of the progress of other initiatives in that cluster and discuss agendas, sequencing and possible output in advance to strengthen their events. Further details can be found in the Stocktaking document.

4. Format of Meetings

In Seoul, Leaders pleaded for more **interactivity** and **informality** at the meetings, with the objective to encourage a more spontaneous and substantive discussion.

This can be achieved with the help of a well-prepared and **active chair**: Interactivity must be encouraged through active management of the meeting. No more than one introductory intervention and one respondent should be accepted: thereafter, there should be free-flowing discussion, without any pre-established list of speakers to avoid the tedious reading of statements.

Informality could also be encouraged through longer **informal intervals**, such as coffee breaks, cocktails, cultural visits and private space adjacent to meeting rooms.

In addition to the established ministerial meetings, **informal retreat sessions** are suggested. These Leaders/Ministers-only sessions should have informal seating, not even a non-agenda or indicative list of topics⁸ and minutes need not to be taken (no minutes, no officials and no external audio transmission). The topic of such a retreat session could develop during the normal meeting and be proposed by the chair *ad hoc*. The retreat sessions could helpfully be concentrating around one or two main subjects – see further below. Generally speaking, more privacy i.e. smaller delegations and fewer persons in the meeting room, would contribute to a more relaxed atmosphere. Especially summits should be kept smaller as Leaders don't have to indulge in process management but should concentrate on politics.

⁷ Para. 27

⁸ The luncheon hosted by the Chinese VPM during the 3rd ASEM FMM is a good example for this approach.

The value of bilateral meetings in the margin of summits or ministerials is well known. Therefore, sufficient **time slots for bilaterals** should be arranged, to avoid disintegration of the plenary meeting.

Effective use of the time available and stringent management of the process should assure that the time allocated for meetings need not be prolonged.

5. Contents of Meetings

First, we need to carefully select issues with an “**ASEM added value**”, i.e. issues where exchanges between Asian and European partners can create the difference, such as security, transnational crime issues, improvement of the economic framework between the two regions and initiating more people-to-people and cultural contacts. Duplication has to be avoided, within the process between various ASEM meetings, especially ASEM ministerials as well as with other international fora. To treat specialised subjects in a superficial manner or to repeat discussions already having taken place somewhere else is simply a costly waste of time.

Second, we should ensure that the **agenda is focussed** and with **few** main topics. For that purpose, the cluster approach – see above - could easily be used.

Third, as discussed above in relation (para. 4), sessions within meetings could be organised around a single **theme**, to achieve a focussed and in-depth discussion for each session on one important issue rather than a superficial discussion on a long list of agenda items.

Fourth, to ensure the respect of the principle that **no issue is excluded** beforehand as defined in the AECF 2000⁹, all meetings should have an agenda point on recent developments or equivalent, to allow for debate on **any** topic that any partner would like to raise. This would also assure that urgent current affairs could be raised which would in turn increase interest in the process. The maxim “The more attractive the agenda, the better the ministerial turn out” should be the guiding principle when considering both the frequency and the agenda of ministerial meetings, in line with AECF 2000¹⁰.

Fifth, ASEM partners should consider to **meet in specific contexts** to exchange views on agendas and to identify common concerns and endeavours. The recent decision by ASEM Foreign Ministers to meet at the appropriate level before the United Nations General Assembly or other UN gatherings, should be used widely.

Sixth, in line with the activities under the Trade Facilitation Action Plan, especially the TFAP Concrete Goals 2000-2002, ASEM partners should **consult** each other closely and, where appropriate, try to find common positions, in international trade bodies, such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

⁹ Para. 12 AECF 2000

¹⁰ Para. 21 AECF 2000

6. Outcome of meetings

Before and during every meeting, we lose an unnecessarily large amount of time and force to negotiate Chair Statements – that anyway are the responsibility of the chair. We could use our energy on other more productive matters. Therefore, we suggest replacing negotiated Chair Statements by

- a **factual report**, made by the Chair, enumerating the issues that have been discussed during the meeting, and
- a **political declaration** on one or more topical issues - as at the second and third Summits¹¹.

The latter should be prepared by SOMs.

7. Broadening the ASEM Dialogue

This *Vademecum* started out by underlining that the unique character of ASEM lay in its dialogue nature. This must be exploited even outside the dialogue between ministers and Leaders – specifically with regard to the private sector and the civil society.

In line with the decision by leaders at ASEM III, the business sector, represented via the **Asia Europe Business Forum (AEBF)**, should be further encouraged to play a more active role in the economic ASEM pillar. Dialogue should be facilitated, both among business executives and between the private and the public sector. Business should be invited to ministerials and other meetings, and be associated in the appropriate manner even to Summits, as planned for the Fourth Summit. In turn, AEBF will have to assure continuity to assure attendance and fruitful contributions.

ASEM must indeed be relevant to the general public to be worthwhile. The updated Asia-Europe Cooperation Framework (AECF 2000) calls for a strengthening of links with the **“public, think tanks, research groups, universities and all sectors of society, thereby promoting the human dimension in the ASEM process”**¹². Thus, while ASEM was created “top-down” as a dialogue among leaders, now in the more mature state of the dialogue process the “bottom-up” approach should be given more importance and weight. The best way of achieving this is involvement. Among the ways to achieve this involvement are that regular meetings between NGO representatives and officials should be encouraged, parliamentarians should be further implicated and all sectors of society should be invited to contribute their ideas to the process and civil society-type initiatives should be implemented. The **Asia Europe Foundation (ASEF)** is already playing an important role in this respect and its engagement should be encouraged.

8. Corporate Identity

Although bringing together leaders of nearly half of mankind and world gross national product, the ASEM process is not well known to the public. One important reason certainly is that ASEM is lacking a distinct corporate identity, which makes the marketing of the product more difficult. Nearly every organiser of a summit or ministerial meeting has

¹¹ London Summit: declaration on the Financial Crisis; Seoul Summit: declaration on the Korean Peninsula

¹² Para. 11

developed a logo, always attempting to translate the message that Asia and Europe communicate, work together. (See cover page of this *Vademecum*!) We suggest that an effort should be made to develop **one common ASEM logo** which is used for all ASEM events. This could be done in either adopting one of the existing logos or by developing a new one for instance through an ASEM wide competition among artists or schools.

Generally speaking, joint efforts to make ASEM better known to the general public should be undertaken.

9. Conclusion

This *Vademecum* is intended to take stock of the consensus regarding the need for and direction of reform of the process and to facilitate discussion among ASEM partners. Foreign Ministers meeting in Spain in 2002 should be able to recommend for endorsement the results of this reform process launched at ASEM 3 and given further momentum at FMM3 to Leaders meeting in Copenhagen in September 2002.

This introduction is not meant to replace the content of the important annexes which contain further details. Please refer therefore to the common working paper “*Consolidated Views Of EU Member States And The European Commission On The ASEM Process*”, the *Stocktaking Document* and the *interventions* made at FMM3 in Beijing by the ministers of the *United Kingdom, Denmark, Spain and Singapore and the Commissioner for External Relations*.

All these improvements can be implemented without changing the Asia Europe Cooperation Framework (AECF 2000) (http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/asem/asem_process/aecf_2000.htm), which remains the key document for the ASEM process.

ADDENDUM TO VADEMECUM

LIST OF ANNEXES

- Annex 1: Working Paper “Consolidated Views Of EU Member States and the European Commission on the ASEM Process”, page 7
- Annex 2: Stocktaking document, page 11
- Annex 3: Intervention by the Parliamentary Under-secretary of State of the United Kingdom at FMM III, page 15
- Annex 4: Intervention by the Foreign Minister of Spain at FMM III, page 16
- Annex 5: Intervention by the Foreign Minister of Singapore at FMM III, page 18
- Annex 6: Intervention by the Foreign Minister of Denmark at FMM III, page 19
- Annex 7: Intervention by Commissioner Patten, European Commission, page 20

Annex 1

Working Paper **CONSOLIDATED VIEWS OF EU MEMBER STATES AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON THE ASEM PROCESS**

Summary

Since ASEM 3, EU member states and the European Commission have exchanged ideas on possible modifications to the ASEM process. EU partners wish to propose the following amendments as a basis for dialogue:

- **Shorter agendas with fewer topics to allow for substantial discussions at Summits and Ministerial Meetings while retaining the informal dialogue format**
- **Annual Ministerial Meetings when substance warrants**
- **More concise and forward looking Chair's Statements to reflect discussions and decisions at the meetings**
- **Initiatives to encourage involvement of business and civil society and raise public awareness of ASEM**
- **Improving the exchange of information among partners**
- **Better monitoring and evaluation of ASEM initiatives based on stocktaking.**

1. ASEM Summits and Foreign Ministers' Meetings

The ASEM dialogue needs to be more interactive and result-oriented if it is to be attractive to Leaders and Foreign Ministers. Shorter agendas, limited to a few main themes, would allow for more focussed and substantial discussions. Streamlining the agenda must not lead to exclusion of any issue a priori, a principle now formally integrated into the AECF 2000. Presentations of lead speakers at the beginning of each session would help set the theme and direction of discussions. An interactive chair would assure focussed discussions, summing up conclusions.

The informality of the meetings as well as the dialogue character have to be maintained, retreat style discussions could be considered. Business arrangements should allocate sufficient time for bilateral meetings, a relaxed setting allowing for coffee breaks and for personal interaction could further contribute to the success of meetings.

Summits

While respecting the three pillars of ASEM, the agenda should provide fewer and more specific topics in order to focus discussions. Issues should be selected with a view to discussions leading to concrete results. Duplication with exchanges in other fora (i.e. G8, WTO, and UN) should be avoided.

The ASEM tradition of having three sessions, underlining the equal importance of the pillars, should be upheld. However, it might be possible to reduce the total length of summits by using the time more effectively. A structured approach to meals means that they could be utilised for substantive discussions.

Foreign Ministers' Meetings

Based on past experience, we think that a Foreign Ministers' Meeting held a few months before a Summit would prepare the overall lines and main elements for that Summit. In addition, Foreign Ministers will work on their own agenda, raising not only the profile of their meeting, but of the ASEM process in general. Following the FMM, Senior Officials would deal with the detailed preparation of the Summit.

The political dialogue should be the core of Foreign Ministers' Meetings. The agenda could include:

- one or two main themes broad enough to allow for structured in depth exchanges,
- one or two themes dealing with recent developments in both regions
- one theme dealing with a topical, current issue, of mutual interest where ASEM presents genuine value added, (possibility to explore new positions or convergence)
- one theme dealing with the third ASEM pillar, possibly related to current or future ASEM initiatives.

While the core items of the indicative list will be agreed by SOM, the agenda will remain open to allow for an interactive, substantial dialogue.

According to the AECF para 22, Foreign Ministers, supported by Senior Officials (para 26 and 27), are responsible for the overall coordination of the ASEM process. Ministers should deal with the general direction of ASEM, not with details. These are to be handled by SOM, SOMTI and FinM Deputies. The facilitating role of Co-ordinators in the ASEM process is also recognised in para. 22.

The comprehensive co-ordinating role of Foreign Ministers does not mean repeating or anticipating discussions in specialised ASEM fora such as FinMM, EMM and SOM. **AECF 2000** defines the respective roles of the meetings clearly: Political and global issues: para. 12-14; economic and financial fields: para. 16; social, cultural and educational fields, paras. 17-19.

Senior Officials' Meetings

Senior Officials should evaluate the ASEM process at each meeting and if appropriate suggest modifications to Foreign Ministers for their endorsement.

The important role of SOM in the process is clearly spelt out in paras. 22 in conjunction with 26 of **AECF 2000**: SOM participates in the overall co-ordination with FMM, receives reports, reviews progress achieved, recommends continuation or termination of individual initiatives and forms thematic clusters of activities.

The practice of oral presentations by ASEM bodies such as ASEF, AEBF and AEETC could be replaced by concise written reports which could form the basis of an informal dialogue between Senior Officials or Ministers and the representatives of these bodies.

Chair's statement at Summits and Foreign Ministers' Meetings

EU partners are in favour of a shorter more user friendly Chair's statement, rather than a long communiqué. It should not repeat positions already known but reflect discussions and decisions taken at the meeting highlighting contributions by the ASEM process. The Chair's Statement should be forward looking and attract positive attention from the media and the general public.

2. Frequency of Ministerial Meetings

While ASEM Foreign Ministers, in strengthening their role as overall co-ordinators of the process, will normally meet once a year, the decision at ASEM 3 to hold annual ministerial meetings presents both a risk and a chance to make gains. The risk is that ministers will lose interest in ASEM if there is not enough substantive business to discuss. Ministers should remain flexible to skip one year if sufficient substance is lacking or to substitute the Ministerial with a Senior Officials' Meeting.

The possible gains are that annual ministerial meetings

- keep initiatives moving forward
- could lead to better co-ordination
- provide greater familiarity between regions leading to more open dialogue

The same applies to Meetings of Senior Officials as they take on an increased burden with more frequent Ministerials.

3. Asia Europe Business Fora (AEBF)

Business fora should be organised so as to maximise participation of business people (relative to representatives of business associations and government). In line with the decision by Leaders at ASEM 3, to invite the AEBF to play a more active role in the activities carried out to implement TFAP and IPAP, official representation of AEBF at Summits, Ministerials, SOMTI and IEG should be assured, to enhance links between officials and the business community. SOMTI will continue to reply to those recommendations of AEBF addressed to officials to maintain an exchange of views. Correspondingly, AEBF is expected to engage in this dialogue. Denmark is planning to organise an Asia-Europe Business Forum (AEBF) back-to-back with ASEM 4.

4. Involving All Sectors of Society in the ASEM Process

In order to strengthen ties between the peoples of Asia and Europe, ASEM must be relevant to the general public to be worthwhile. The best way of achieving this is involvement. The process can be gradual. High-level official contacts, inclusion of civil society and representative NGOs in the work-programme of ASEF and implementation of civil society-type initiatives offer practical ways to get them involved.

ASEM should encourage regular meetings between representatives of the People's Forum and SOM Leaders - and inject more substance into such meetings. All sectors of society should be invited to contribute their ideas to the ASEM process, to be considered with an open mind.

AECF 2000 supports this approach: Para. 11, dealing with co-operation in other areas, calls for strengthening the links with the “public, think tanks, research groups, universities and all sectors of society, thereby promoting the human dimension in the ASEM process.” Para. 19 lists the encouragement of “a broad-based dialogue and networking among all sectors of society, including inter alia parliamentary representatives” a key priority. Para. 25 lists “civil society” as one of the possible “prime actors” of an ASEM initiative.

5. Better Exchange of Information

A properly maintained electronic network of ASEM partners - a virtual secretariat - could do much to help information flows. Such a network could give a ready overview of ASEM activity. Secure bulletin boards could be a quick and easy way of sharing draft documents, or exchanging views about individual activities. ASEM co-ordinators should of course continue to be the primary channel for communication at the strategic level.

Immediate improvement could be achieved in using the existing instrument of sharing information among **ASEM contact points**, whose list should be kept up-to-date regularly.

The SOM in Stockholm on 25-27 April could consider mandating experts to examine the technical and financial aspects of how to improve the exchange of information between ASEM partners. *[The Stockholm SOM has mandated a working group to develop terms of references and make a feasibility study.]*

6. Review and Evaluation of ASEM activities

Projects, once launched, need to be followed-up and evaluated. ASEM has taken several imaginative and potentially valuable initiatives but a lack of follow-up has created an impression of superficiality. The number of initiatives undertaken in a given timespan should not be too large in order to allow good evaluation and sufficient impact and visibility of each initiative.

A separate paper will be submitted to Asian partners for discussion, outlining stocktaking modalities and ways and means to achieve synergies between ASEM initiatives.

The work programme has had little impact so far. It may be more useful to maintain a continuously updated calendar of activities/events.

[This paper was submitted to the Stockholm SOM, see Annex 2]

7. Participation

Since no decision on enlargement can be taken before ASEM 4 in Copenhagen in September 2002, a discussion on substance need not take place until nearer the Summit.

Annex 2

ASEM STOCKTAKING

(update, taking into account discussion at the Stockholm SOM, April 2001 and the results of the third ASEM Foreign Ministers Meeting in Beijing, May 24-25, 2001)

INFORMATION EXCHANGE, MONITORING AND REVIEW MECHANISM FOR ASEM INITIATIVES AND ACTIVITIES - SYNERGIES BETWEEN THE VARIOUS INITIATIVES -

Introduction

Since ASEM I, many valuable initiatives have been launched in the ASEM framework. These initiatives have as their objective to enhance the relations between Europe and Asia in the political, economic, financial, social and cultural fields. It is now time for an overview of the initiatives endorsed or noted by the three Summits, as mandated by Leaders at ASEM III and requested by partners.

This paper discusses modalities for monitoring of and assessing ASEM initiatives. It also proposes methods for developing synergies between the initiatives ensuring consistency with the updated Asia-Europe Co-operation Framework (AECF 2000) and preventing duplication of efforts with the view to developing ASEM Clusters in line with AECF 2000. These methods will be endorsed at ASEM IV. The objective is to strengthen the impact of the ASEM process and take full advantage of the experience acquired.

1. Overview of Implementation

At **ASEM I** in Bangkok in 1996, twelve initiatives were endorsed and Leaders agreed to consider a further five initiatives. Several of the initiatives were procedural in nature and reflected the desire to set the process on a sound footing. At **ASEM II** in London in 1998, a total of seven new initiatives were endorsed, with eleven further new initiatives noted “for further development in the context of AECF”.

Of the initiatives launched at ASEM I, over 70 per cent have been implemented, while the figure for those endorsed at ASEM II is 50 per cent. The latter figure is probably a realistic assessment of the rate of implementation, as several of the initiatives agreed at the first summit were of a procedural nature.

At **ASEM III** in Seoul in 2000, sixteen initiatives were endorsed and seven were noted. For the first time, initiatives were grouped according to thematic clusters, which facilitated a more coherent approach and allowed partners to have a better overview of the ASEM process. Leaders adopted the AECF 2000, which gives the SOM the responsibility of reviewing the progress of ASEM initiatives and recommending whether individual initiatives be continued or terminated.

At the third ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting (FMM3), another 5 initiatives were endorsed¹³.

2. Co-ordinators: Assisting in monitoring of ASEM activities

Co-ordinators are entrusted to

- maintain and update a list of all endorsed ASEM initiatives, based upon information from the respective facilitators;
- establish a database of all ASEM initiatives using an agreed format¹⁴;
- gather, consolidate, monitor and assess the information received from facilitators/sponsors of the various initiatives. Facilitators/sponsors of initiatives are encouraged to use annexes 4 and 5 for reporting of initiatives; and
- assure that facilitators/sponsors supply updated information on a regular basis¹⁵, especially if new elements occur, in order to facilitate the Co-ordinators' task.

3. Developing Synergies between Initiatives

In order to establish a consolidated work programme (annex 6, Chinese document)-consolidation and not proliferation being the objective - possible synergies between initiatives must be ascertained. This would facilitate an easy overview of ASEM initiatives and enable ASEM partners to build on expertise already acquired. A first step in this direction was taken at ASEM III, where the endorsed initiatives were presented in three clusters.

All on-going initiatives of ASEM I and II and those endorsed at ASEM III are grouped in Annex 1, according to the pillar under which they belong (Political; Economic and Financial; or Social and Cultural) and then according to suggested clusters¹⁶ within those pillars. However, there are also cross-pillar issues. Facilitators for initiatives within clusters should be aware of the progress of other initiatives in that cluster, and in related clusters. Procedural items, e.g. FMM, have not been included. The clusters illustrate where linkages might be created. They are not meant to be exhaustive nor to preclude other relevant linkages.

ASEM initiatives are an important part of the visible output of the ASEM process and must be perceived to be effective so that the process as a whole is well received by the public. But it is also important that they be linked back to, and mutually supportive of, the ASEM dialogue. The cluster on Transnational Crime is an example of a set of initiatives, which could be taken up in the political dialogue.

¹³ Kobe Research Project; ASEM Public Debt Management Forum; ASEM SOM Information Exchange, Monitoring and Review Mechanism for ASEM Initiatives and Activities; Lifelong Learning; Seminar on Asia-Europe Cooperation on the Applications of Information Technology to Human Resources Development in the Mekong Sub-region

¹⁴ Technical experts will not only evaluate the feasibility of such a "database" but also the broader scope of a "Virtual Secretariat".

¹⁵ Reporting before SOM and FMM is of utmost importance

¹⁶ Clustering of initiatives is encouraged by AECF 2000, para. 27.

4. List of annexes of Stocktaking document

(only annex 1, the chart of clusters is reproduced in this document)

- 1. ASEM Initiatives Grouped by Clusters (examples)**
2. Status Report of Initiatives Endorsed and Noted at ASEM III
3. Status Report of Initiatives Endorsed and Noted at ASEM 1 and ASEM II
4. Draft ASEM New Initiative Checklist
5. Draft ASEM Initiative Status Checklist
6. ASEM Calendar/work programme of upcoming events, Chinese proposal.
7. ASEM Contact points

ASEM INITIATIVES GROUPED BY CLUSTER

Political pillar

Justice and Home Affairs Issues

- Anti-corruption initiative
- Anti-money laundering initiative
- Initiative to Combat Trafficking in Women and Children
- Initiative aimed at combating the sexual exploitation of children
- Ministerial Conference on Cooperation for the Management of Migratory Flows Europe-Asia
- Symposium on Law Enforcement Organs' Cooperation in Combating Transnational Crime

Human rights

- Informal human rights seminars

Environment

- Environment Ministers' Meeting
- Science and Technology Cooperation on Forestry and Conservation and Sustainable Development
- Asia-Europe Environment Technology Centre

Health

- Experts Meeting on Child Welfare and related website
- Community health seminar
- Initiative on HIV-Aids

Economic and Financial Pillar

Economic

- Trade Facilitation Action Plan
- WTO Trade Facilitation Conference
- Investment Promotion Action Plan
- Asia-Europe Business Forum
 - ASEF Young Entrepreneurs Meeting
- Meetings of Directors-General of ASEM Customs authorities plus working groups
- Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Conference
- Seminar of the State and Market
- Seminar on Asia-Europe co-operation in SMEs
- Trans-Asian Railway Network

Finance

- ASEM Trust Fund (Phase 2)
- EFEX
- Kobe Initiative

Information Technology

- ASEM Ministerial Conference on Science and Technology
- Initiative to address Digital Divide
- Seminar on Information and Telecommunications Technology

Globalisation

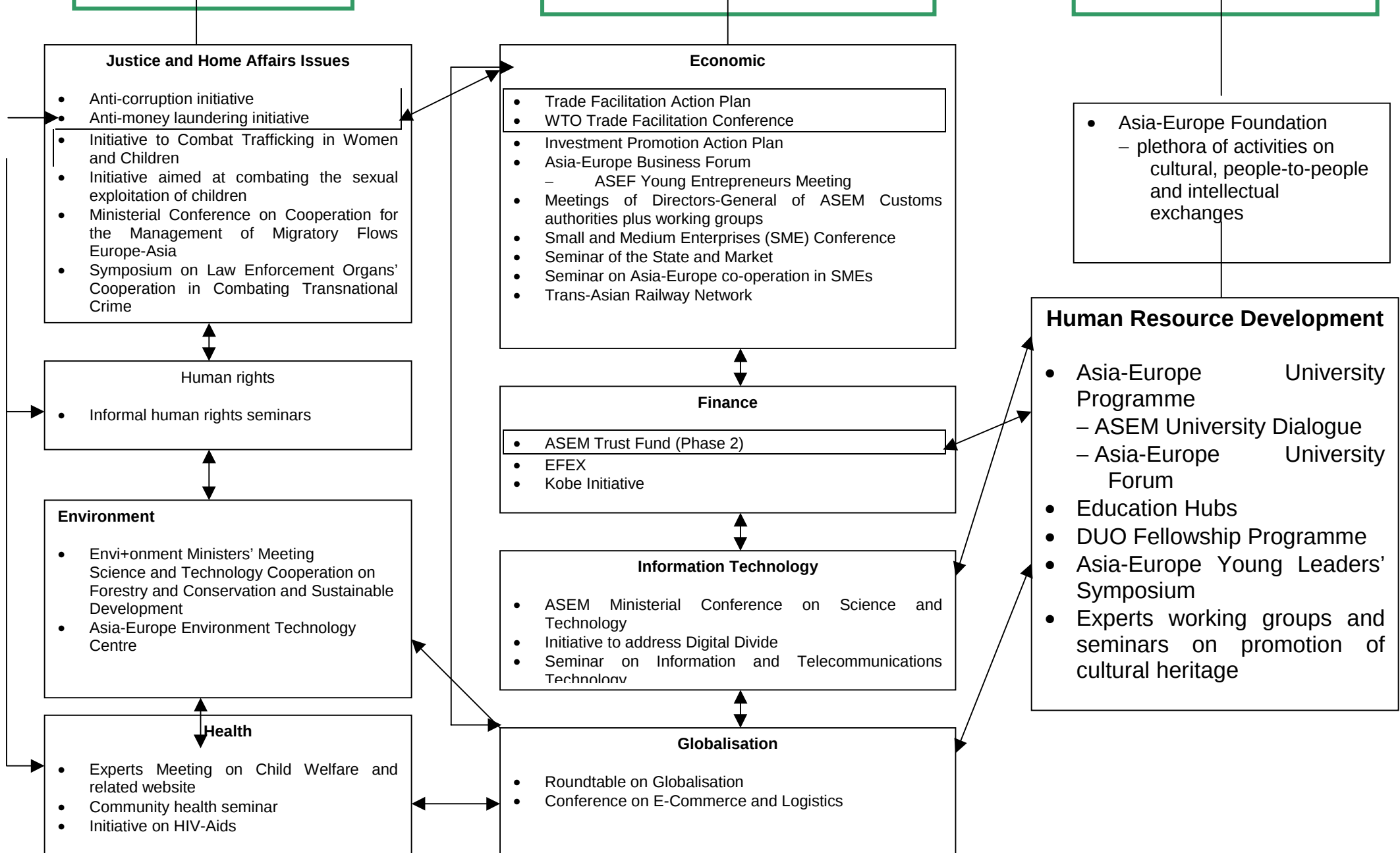
- Roundtable on Globalisation
- Conference on E-Commerce and Logistics

Social and Cultural Pillar

- Asia-Europe Foundation
 - plethora of activities on cultural, people-to-people and intellectual exchanges

Human Resource Development

- Asia-Europe University Programme
 - ASEM University Dialogue
 - Asia-Europe University Forum
- Education Hubs
- DUO Fellowship Programme
- Asia-Europe Young Leaders' Symposium
- Experts working groups and seminars on promotion of cultural heritage



Annex 3

Intervention by the Baroness Scotland, Parliamentary Under-secretary of State of the United Kingdom at FMM III

- Should take opportunity presented by more frequent Foreign Ministers' Meetings to give strategic direction to ASEM process;
- Four suggestions for how we might achieve this:
 - use the opportunity of yearly meetings to have more **in-depth** and **open exchanges** on issues of mutual interest. Should not take on more responsibility for economic issues - our Finance and Economic Ministers are perfectly capable of continuing ASEM work in these areas.
 - ASEM initiatives also give substance to the ASEM process. Welcome the work done by the Philippines and the European Commission to **re-group initiatives by themes**. This work should have two objectives. First, to identify synergies that can lead to greater cooperation between ASEM partners across the range of initiatives. Second, to allow those new ideas and themes generated by taking forward the initiatives to feed back into and inspire Foreign **Ministers'** dialogue. Suggest we task Senior Officials to take forward work with these two objectives in mind.
 - **Identifying themes** for Ministerial discussions should contribute to improved coherence and visibility of ASEM political dialogue. Important that ASEM is seen to address issues relevant to everyday lives in the two regions. Welcome idea that ASEM IV might pay special attention to social issues. Hope business and civil society will be encouraged to play their part at the Summit.
 - Effective information exchange is key to monitoring progress and quality of ASEM work. Welcome the idea of creating a web-based '**Virtual ASEM Secretariat**'. Like the work on identifying common themes, this should aim to encourage closer coordination between ASEM partners. It could also help publicise initiatives and increase awareness of ASEM's work amongst the general population. Senior Officials should be asked to examine the options of setting up this type of Secretariat and report back in time for the next Foreign Ministers' meeting.

Annex 4

Intervention by the Foreign Minister of Spain at FMM III

Our work over the last 6 or 7 years is a solid base on which we can construct the future of ASEM.

There is no need to enumerate the great number of initiatives that we have developed since the first Meeting, nor the many High Level Meetings we have held over these years, to highlight the enormous efforts we have made to strengthen and expand our relations.

What we must do, however, to comply with the Seoul Summit's Mandate is to carefully examine this effort in order to evaluate its results, and, if necessary, to undertake the changes that will improve our efficiency.

This is why, in the first place, I believe that the decision adopted in Seoul of clustering initiatives represents a very positive step forward. In the past, many initiatives were dispersed, and this was due, to a certain extent, to the fact that their origin and nature were essentially bilateral. As we progress in this clustering, we will reinforce an ASEM oriented conception that will progressively ensure an "ASEM-added value" to our work.

In the second place, we must remember that our leaders agreed that we should also review the functioning of ASEM.

That is to say, the mechanics and the logistics, and, most important, the dynamics of ASEM.

This makes it mandatory to remember that ASEM was originally conceived as an informal, high-level meeting between Europe and Asia, where all issues, be very political or economic, people-to-people or related to regional or global aspects could be discussed in a frank and open manner.

In fact, ASEM was the result of an agreement among countries that are friends and share a common objective: the need to strengthen and reinforce relations on all levels in a globalised and ever-more complex world.

It is evident that any international relationship or meeting requires both a structure and an organisation. The problems arise when the contradictions between a political vision of informal and intimate meetings and a cumbersome formal

structure become too accentuated.

I would not want my words to be considered a criticism so much as an appeal to reflection and self-examination.

Although ASEM is strong enough to carry the present formal structure, it would imply limiting both its agility, and its potential for progress and development.

I will not go into very much detail now. I promise to do so on the next Ministerial Meeting, which will take place in Madrid on 7/8 June 2002.

Pending intensive consultations over the following months with ASEM partners, we would like to act on the following questions:

1. avoiding unnecessary duplications, both with respect to initiatives and to discussions;
2. concentrating our discussions on a few issues, and ensuring that substance, and not form, is our primary objective. This implies re-designing the role the Chairman's Declaration has played up to now;
3. identifying the major issues which we feel should channel our efforts and clustering the initiatives, that should be conceived as part of a process and an objective, and not as isolated occurrences.

I am sure that, together, we will be able to flesh out these ideas over the coming months,

Finally it is evident that during next year's Ministerial we will be concentrating on preparing the Copenhagen Summit. But we should also use the occasion to adopt the changes necessary to re-vitalise and energise our dialogue.

Annex 5

Intervention by the Foreign Minister of Singapore at FMM III

- I have asked for the floor to comment on modalities for future ASEM Leaders' dialogue.
- You may recall that at ASEM III in Seoul, our Leaders' wanted future ASEM meetings to be more interactive and informal. The main objective is to encourage a more spontaneous and substantive discussion at ASEM meetings.
- When the ASEM process started in Bangkok in 1996, our leaders had in mind an informal process where they can have a candid exchange of views. It is thus important to avoid a very formalised arrangement as this might discourage an interactive discussion.
- We must facilitate an interactive discussion when our leaders meet in Copenhagen in 2002. For the Foreign Minister's meeting in Spain next year, we can also experiment with other formats to encourage an interactive discussion.
- We have some preliminary ideas for future leaders meeting as well as for future foreign Minister's meeting. I would like to put them forward for discussion.
- First, we can consider organising one or two sessions along a certain theme. It will not be easy to decide on a theme. However, the idea is to have a focussed and in-depth discussion on one important issue, instead of having a superficial discussion on a long list of Agenda Items.
- Second, we can consider having an informal retreat session. By "retreat", I mean a session with an informal seating arrangement, where only the Leaders or FMs (and interpreters) are involved. In other words, there will be no officials or notetakers, and the proceedings will not be recorded. This is a format that we have used successfully in ASEAN, APEC and the Commonwealth. It has worked well in these fora to encourage a good discussion. It is something we can consider for ASEM.
- Third, we support the EC's calls for reconsidering the need for Chairman's Statements. An unnecessarily large amount of time and energy is spent negotiating Chairman's Statements. This time could be more usefully spent on other more productive matters.
- Let me add in conclusion that these are ideas for discussions. We have no firm views and will be happy to hear the views of other delegations. The important thing is to ensure that our leaders have a good discussion when they meet in Copenhagen.

Annex 6

Intervention on ASEM 4 by the Danish foreign minister, Mogens Lykketoft.

- Preparations for ASEM 4 are well underway. The Danish government is looking forward to welcome Leaders in Copenhagen on 22nd-24th of September 2002. The venue will be Christiansborg Castle, located in the centre of Copenhagen.
- Following the model of previous summits we envisage three working sessions reflecting the equal importance of the three pillars of ASEM. Furthermore, meals should to the extent possible be used for working purposes. In accordance with the ASEM process as intended, we will strive to keep discussions informal and ensure sufficient time for bilateral meetings.
- In order to facilitate a substantial dialogue it might be useful to focus on a limited number of themes. These could in principle be agreed upon at the Foreign Ministers Meeting in Spain. Leaders could, of course, raise other issues of interest to them.
- The use of lead speakers and respondents deserves to be explored further in order to focus discussions.
- In view of the disproportionate amount of work that goes into the chairman's statement, it might be useful to look into the possibility of replacing it with a short factual chairman's summary. This could still be combined with declarations on topical issues, if called for, in line with previous declarations on the Asian financial crisis and the Korean Peninsula.
- In light of the Foreign Ministers Meeting in Spain a few months before the summit, we do not envisage another Foreign Ministers Meeting in Copenhagen. However, it goes without saying that ministers who wish to accompany their Leaders will be more than welcome.
- We are aware that some Asian partners would like to have their foreign minister present when summit documents are finalised in Copenhagen. In order to accommodate this wish, an open Co-coordinators Meeting at ministerial level will be organised on the eve of the summit. The meeting will be open to all foreign ministers wishing to attend.
- The Federation of Danish Industries is planning to host the 7th Asia-Europe Business Forum in Copenhagen a few days before ASEM 4. We will consult partners on the modalities for interaction between the Business Forum and the summit.
- Based on past experience, we foresee that NGO's will organise their own parallel conference.
- Finally, let me assure you that Denmark will do its utmost to ensure a successful summit in Copenhagen in close cooperation with ASEM-partners.

Annex 7

Intervention by Commissioner Chris Patten, European Commission

Agenda item 7d) Modalities for Future ASEM Leaders' Dialogue

Let me concentrate for a few minutes on the **management** of the ASEM process, an issue we have to deal with in our capacity as overall co-ordinators. In addition, our Leaders expressed at the Seoul Summit the strong wish that future summits should be more “informal and interactive” and that we should make some proposals to this end.

European partners have dealt with this and other important issues in some detail in the Working Paper “*Consolidated Views of EU Member States and the European Commission on the ASEM Process*”, which was already endorsed at last SOM in Stockholm.

What are our main proposals?

- All ASEM meetings, especially Summits and ministerial meetings, should have shorter agendas with fewer topics to allow for substantial discussion while retaining informality.
- In that respect, retreat type of events, a procedure already tested by our Asian partners, could contribute to informal discussions.
- In line with the new Asia-Europe Co-operation Framework, we should have annual ministerial meetings to deepen our relationship, however, only when substance warrants.
- We should aim at more concise and forward-looking Chair's statements to reflect discussions and decisions of the meetings; a factual statement, complemented by a political declaration on a topical issue could also suffice.
- In order to make ASEM more relevant to the general public in both regions, we should encourage more initiatives reaching out to the general public, involving opinion leaders, artists, the young but also the elderly - thereby opening up the process to all sectors of society.
- We all have many bright ideas and propose initiatives, seminars, activities.

However, we need better monitoring and evaluation of ASEM initiatives, not only to reach synergies between them, but also to present what we are doing in a more concise manner to the public. We should therefore also ensure that we discuss the results of these activities. In our view, the cluster of initiatives on fighting transnational crimes is an excellent example in that respect because if implemented properly, the results will help our Leaders and ourselves in our discussions. Our senior officials have already started to think about thematic clusters and we should be able to deal with the issue concretely when we meet next time.

- We have sensed that we are all thinking along these lines and we are grateful that so many partners joined our proposal on the SOM Information Exchange, Monitoring and Review Mechanism as cosponsors. An expert group will study the feasibility of a “Virtual Secretariat” to which we will happily supply the library section of our comprehensive website.