

**Statement by Kirill Barsky,
Ambassador-at-Large of the Ministry of
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at the High-Level Policy Dialogue
“ASEM at 25: Strengthening Asia-Europe
Partnership in a Transforming World”
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**ADVANCING ASEM PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND
DEVELOPMENT FOR THE TWO REGIONS AND BEYOND**

Mr. Chair,

Dear colleagues,

Asia-Europe Meetings mechanism was established 25 years ago when Asian and European countries had just turned over the page of the Cold War. They truly believed in the ideals of cooperation and were eager to join hands to make the world a better place. Russia was among them.

Let me remind you that Russia welcomed the creation of ASEM and immediately filed an application but it was only in 2010 that my country was admitted to the forum. Since then Russia – a unique nation belonging to both Asia and Europe – has been trying to make a difference working hard to strengthen the Asia-Europe partnership.

Much has changed for the last 25 years. Today we have to defend peace, multilateralism and free trade which are under the pressure of power politics, unilateral sanctions and trade protectionism. Today we are confronted with new challenges as the COVID-19 pandemic. And we all need sustainable and stability more than ever before.

However the aspiration of Asian and European countries for cooperation is making its way against all odds. Moreover, multilateral cooperation has proved to be a reliable, time-tested remedy at the times of crisis. Without it, quick and lasting economic recovery is not feasible.

In fact, when we speak about Europe and Asia we are trapped in an outdated paradigm departing from the assumption that Europe is Europe and Asia is Asia. This old vision is rejected by the reality and should be replaced by a more adequate Eurasian vision. We are Eurasia.

No one can deny that our world is getting more interconnected and interdependent. The Eurasian continent is not an exception. It is not simply a geographic notion. It is a common diplomatic space connected by the growing multilateralism, with numerous regional and trans-regional international organizations and fora stepping up cooperation in a great variety of areas. The Asia-Europe dialogue is a vibrant example of multilateralism. Those organizations and fora should recognize each other and reach out for each other. I am sure that the day is not too distant when these groupings will shape a broad partnership network.

Eurasia is connected by transport, energy and ICT infrastructure. No wonder striving for better connectivity is placed very high in the list of priorities of both national development strategies and regional mechanisms including Eurasian Economic Union, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, ASEAN, Belt and Road project, European Union, OSCE, CICA, UN European Economic Commission and UN ESCAP. Building sufficient and resilient infrastructure with harmonized regulations is extremely important for inclusive and sustainable economic development.

Eurasia is connected by a ‘noodle bowl’ of bilateral and multilateral **free** trade arrangements that underpin the trade liberalization drive in our macro-region. Among the champions are the EU, ASEAN and China. The Eurasian Economic Union is a late-comer but it has already signed Free Trade Agreements with Vietnam, Singapore, Serbia and Iran.

Last but not least, it is connected by digitalization which will incorporate all governments and businesses in a common seamless space of mutual trust. One of the promising projects explored by the EAEU is developing digital transport corridors. It may be of interest for other ASEM participants.

The analysis of these trends led us to a conclusion that the future of Eurasia belongs to 'integration of integrations'. This is the thrust of the initiative of Greater Eurasian Partnership formulated by Mr. Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, and supported by the Eurasian Economic Union, China and India.

Greater Eurasian Partnership is a concept of building a loose framework for comfortable interaction aimed at creating a unified economic space of equal, respectful and mutually beneficial cooperation. The overarching idea is crystal clear – to achieve better coordination between the existing regional organizations, integration strategies, trade policies and trans-border projects.

The Eurasian Economic Union is open to cooperation with all stakeholders in Eurasia and beyond. With some of them like China the work is well under way. With others like ASEAN the EAEU is rapidly enhancing ties. There are regional organizations like the European Union which are yet to make their mind.

As a cross-regional forum ASEM is designed to construct a durable bridge connecting Asia and Europe. As Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Mr. Sergey Lavrov emphasized in his statement this morning it is only through concerted efforts that we can stand up to common challenges and threats. Asia-Europe Meetings mechanism has a special role to play in erasing dividing lines in the Greater Eurasian space and embracing everyone from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean for the benefit of stronger cross-platform relations and practical cooperation.

Thank you.