

**INTERVENTION BY AMB. NGUYEN NGUYET NGA**  
**AT THE HIGH-LEVEL POLICY DIALOGUE**  
**ASEM AT 25: STRENGTHENING ASIA - EUROPE PARTNERSHIP IN A TRANSFORMING WORLD**  
*(J.W. Marriot Hotel, Hanoi, 13.30 – 18.00 hrs., 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2021)*

**SESSION II**  
**SHAPING A VISION FOR A STRONGER ASIA – EUROPE PARTNERSHIP**

**BUILDING A PEOPLE-CENTRED AND GLOBAL ASEM FOR THE GREAT RESET**

The launch of ASEM in 1996 was not only a significant landmark of the Asia -Europe history but also meant a timely response of the two continents to the immediate post - Cold War setting.

After 25 years, ASEM finds itself at a pivotal juncture. We have already seen unprecedented changes in response to rapid digital transformation, transboundary challenges, especially the covid-19 pandemic, and the fast-changing geo-economic and geo-political landscape. All these show that a great reset of the foundation of our economies, societies and international relations is very possible.

Now is the time for ASEM to consider a bold vision and an innovative agenda to reassert its relevance and indispensability. I wish to share some points for your consideration.

**First, ASEM could consider crafting a compelling vision and goal of building a people-centered and global ASEM in response to a changing environment and new developments.**

This vision can be built on ASEM's achievements and its unique role as the largest forum to discuss issues important to both two continents and the world and to connect the people from Asia and Europe. The vision should aim at meeting ASEM people's new and pressing needs and also tackling emerging challenges and opportunities.

**Second, to that end, ASEM should take a leading role in championing multilateralism and an open, equitable, rules-based and inclusive international order.**

In face of increasing geopolitical competition, trade tensions, anti-globalization sentiment and protectionism, all ASEM members share vital interest in upholding international law and norms, the UN Charter, cooperative principles and equal partnership spirit.

ASEM should reiterate its steadfast commitment to free trade and the multilateral trading system, multilateral institutions and reform efforts, and improving global governance.

Given a much more complex and uncertain landscape, informal and multidimensional dialogue and cooperation such as ASEM remain instrumental in maintaining international peace and security, building trust and mutual understanding, enhancing preventative diplomacy, resolving disputes and conflicts by peaceful negotiations and legal measures.

**Third, ASEM should also be at the forefront of international efforts to achieve the SDGs and address global challenges, especially the most urgent issues of the 4Cs - that is the COVID-19, comprehensive post-pandemic recovery, comprehensive connectivity – a top priority of ASEM, and climate change.**

As we all know, 4 out of 10 countries most threatened by and vulnerable to climate change are from ASEM. Asian mega-deltas are among the regions that are likely to be especially affected by climate change.

As of today, 5 out of the 10 most corona-affected countries with highest number of cases are ASEM members. The pandemic has indeed multiplied many already daunting challenges, affecting our

societies and economies at their core, reverting a number of development gains in many countries, amplifying poverty and inequalities at a global scale.

As ASEM accounts for over 60% of the world's population and global GDP, its members have huge potential for cooperation and contribution to tackle these challenges. ASEM can become more important now as an incubator and impetus for fighting against the pandemic, addressing climate change, supporting an equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and the COVAX Facility, and promoting cooperation and collaboration on post-pandemic recovery and comprehensive connectivity agenda. It would be meaningful if ASEM could pool resources to set up a COVID-19 Response Fund or a special Trust Fund to support projects addressing the 4Cs.

**Fourth, ASEM should take a holistic and inclusive approach to align its working methods and resources to advance its vision and goal for the great reset.**

This calls for further improvement of ASEM's coordination efficiency and effectiveness, including, where appropriate, by better employing of new technologies, flexible meeting and organizational arrangements.

At the critical time of post-covid 19 recovery and digital transformation, ASEM "Tangible Areas of Cooperation" (TACC) could be revamped accordingly to put more focus on such pressing issues as health security, water security, social equality, reskilling and upskilling, digital literacy for women and girls, disaster preparedness and management...

Members could continue efforts that have been made since the 2006 to create instruments like a Technical Support Unit for ASEM Coordination or an ASEM Chair Support Group to help improve the working methods.

A people-centred ASEM also calls for bolder actions to harness new technologies and networks to broaden and deepen people engagement. This will enable greater mobility amongst the business and academic communities, the youth and women, the media and other stakeholders to help promote strong connections, shared values, culture of peace and make ASEM more people-driven and inclusive.

Promoting the championship of the Asia-Europe Business Forum (AEBF) by creating ASEM Business Advisory Board or Council, setting up ASEM Studies Centers... could be instrumental in ensuring sustained interest of stakeholders and generating innovation that can help increase ASEM's relevance and visibility.

**Finally, ASEM could also strengthen its interactions with key regional and international forums that are tackling similar challenges to ASEM**, like ASEAN, APEC, EU, EAEU, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) ... These will strengthen significantly best practice-sharing, capacity building for digital transformation, green growth and sustainable development, wider public's understanding of the relevance and importance of ASEM.

Together, we can forge a bold vision and an innovative agenda for a people-centered and global ASEM for another 25 years for sustainable peace, security and prosperity of all our people and beyond.