

Remarks

By

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at

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"ASEM at 25: Strengthening Asia - Europe Partnership in a
Transforming World"**

Asia – Pacific in a World of Accelerating Change

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*Excellencies,
Esteemed Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

Warm greetings from Indonesia. At the outset, allow me to thank the organizer for having me participate in this important event to celebrate 25 years of ASEM, reviewing our Asia-Europe Partnership, and map out a vision for the future of ASEM. It is my great pleasure to speak on a very relevant topic, **Asia – Pacific in a World of Accelerating Change**. I apologize that I cannot be in Ha Noi with all of the other speakers due to the current situation of the pandemic.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Over the past decade, the Asia-Pacific region has been deemed to be the most dynamic and promising region. With the regional economy stood at USD 31.3 trillion at the end of 2019, accounting for 36 percent of the global economy, Asia-Pacific is the largest region in the world by total GDP. In addition, ASEAN and its partners have signed the largest CEPA, the RCEP that will add to the optimism.

Although economic prosperity is on the rise in the past decade, the pandemic has put it on hold with contractions, however, we remain optimistic on the rebound when we could defeat the virus. Asia-Pacific has shown resilience in navigating many previous challenges and uncertainties. Over the years, the region rebound after the past crises and I am confident, we will be able to succeed to be the most dynamic region.

The economic growth is mainly contributed by the favorable demographics. The Asia Pacific region, comprised of 4.4 billion people, currently accounts for 56 percent of the world's population. On top of that, the composition of the population is also an important contribution, where by 2030, the working-age population in the region have grown by 165 million people, while in contrast, North America will only add three million.

As millions of people enter the workforce, the region's middle class is expected to continue growing. Currently, 54 percent of the world's middle class, or 2.1 billion people live in the Asia Pacific region. This population will continue to increase by 1.5 billion people to 65 percent in 2030. In comparison, the growth of the middle class for the rest of the world combined will only total 176 million.

These numbers coupled with their strong economic performance, the region present significant potential to play in contributing to the world's economy and to maintaining an

open world economy, upholding the rules-based multilateral trading system, and preventing unjustified discrimination and protectionism.

*Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

In 2020, we are all affected badly by the COVID-19 pandemic. All economies, except a limited few, have experienced economic contractions, posing a dangerous impacts to the socio-economic condition of the people. As the vaccination has started in many countries, however, the concern of access to vaccine remain our grave concern. Therefore, we should work closely to ensure accessibility to the vaccine, especially through multilateral framework.

Despite efforts put forward by our respective governments, however, international cooperation remains very essential. This includes the preparedness we need to ensure in every country and within the respective regional organizations. We should also ensure that economic recovery should be the immediate priority to work on and addressing the significant impacts should be our priority.

As many countries in the region are still struggling to bring the outbreak under control. We must work harder to make the vaccines global public goods, particularly to ensure their accessibility and affordability, particularly in developing countries. We should also avoid politicizing the vaccine because it will not help and make the situation worse.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As the pandemic still far from over, containing the pandemic and vaccination are the most important strategies for all countries. Despite the pandemic, we should start cautiously, the economic recovery efforts by using all mechanisms, including the ASEM, G 20 to promote collaboration in ensuring continuous, unimpeded international trade, investment, and other essential partnerships across the region and intra-region, such as ASEM. We should remind each other that **no one is safe until everyone is**.

Many agreements were achieved within the G20 framework, such as, debt suspension initiatives for economies that are severely impacted by the pandemic, minimizing trade barriers and travel disruptions, protecting the MSMEs through tax relief and innovative financing, and enhancing efforts to contribute to trade-specific SDGs.

Despite all the negative impacts of the COVID-19, some emerging opportunities arose from the uncertainties, such as digital technologies and economies. The digital

platform enabled us to remain in touch and cooperate despite restrictions. Digitalization is also growing in the region, including also in Indonesia with unprecedented speed. Young and creative youth, better infrastructure, and partnerships involving public and private sectors are also crucial in supporting these opportunities.

The digital economy has presented us with significant economic opportunities and has been growing very rapidly during the pandemic. We should utilize this trend and identify the possibility to cooperate in this sector. With the demographic bonus and creative minds of the youth, we should promote interactions among our young generations not only to generate better understanding but also possible cooperation.

Stronger efforts should be undertaken using this platform to promote interactions among our youth and to promote the significant potential of the digital economies between Asia and Europe. As a strong network has been established between Asia and Europe, and as technologies are available at an amazing speed, we should seize these opportunities to enhance their interactions, and also to reduce the digital divide by, among others, expanding access to technical education and training for digital skills.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we are still struggling in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, other urgent issues we need to identify in promoting more mutually beneficial interactions and collaboration are on the field of attaining sustainable development goals (SDGs) and reducing carbon emissions in accordance with the Paris Agreement.

These two subjects are very close to our hearts and we are committed to materialize them in concrete terms through partnership and collaboration at many levels. Attaining the SDGs should be further promoted through partnerships and cooperation and reducing the emission should also be implemented through the provision of international supports as we have agreed in the Paris Agreement.

To implement all of those objectives, we should always bear in mind the need to address the agendas of environmental protection, economic and social development in a balanced manner. We should reject discriminations and protections by using unjustified environmental agendas as this will only hinder us in achieving our post-pandemic economic recovery. We should allow all of us to move forward, to promote unhindered international trade, and at the same time to collaborate to attain sustainable development goals.

Energy and industrial transformation to make them low carbon require not only substantial financial resources but also technologies. While continuing our collaboration toward the COP 26 meeting, we should bear in mind that post-pandemic economic

recovery does not only essential to the livelihood of millions of our peoples affected badly by the pandemic, but also for our ability to attain the objectives of the SDG and carbon emission reduction.

To conclude, COVID-19 serves as another reminder that only solidarity and cooperation can enable us to prevail over the challenges and uncertainties. We need to deepen the Asia-Pacific partnership featuring mutual trust, inclusiveness, and mutually beneficial cooperation. To achieve shared prosperity for the whole region, we must continue to raise the degree and deepen the scope of our regional cooperation. Indonesia is ready to work with all parties in the Asia-Pacific as well as in other regions to build and share a brighter and sustainable future of peace and prosperity.

Thank you.

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