

**OPENING REMARKS BY
H.E. FOREIGN MINISTER BUI THANH SON
AT THE OPENING SESSION OF THE HIGH-LEVEL POLICY
DIALOGUE
“ASEM at 25 – Strengthening Asia-Europe Partnership
in a Transforming World”
*Hanoi, 22 June 2021***

*Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

1.

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the High-level Policy Dialogue: “ASEM at 25 – Strengthening Asia-Europe Partnership in a Transforming world”, directly from Ha Noi and virtually from across Asia and Europe.

Your participations and presence, including Ministers, representatives of government agencies, scholars, businesses, and community stakeholders from the member countries, vividly demonstrate our shared resolve to promote a Asia-Europe partnership for peace, stability and prosperity.

A special welcome to our colleagues from the Republic of Korea, Singapore and the UK - who grace this conference with your direct participations in Hanoi - a positive sign that we finally start to emerge from the pandemic.

2.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Marking the anniversary of 25 years of partnership, ASEM can be proud of its remarkable achievements and progress.

Starting with the vision to build a “New comprehensive Asia-Europe Partnership for Greater Growth”, ASEM has developed into a leading inter-regional cooperation mechanism for peace, stability and prosperity. Leveraging the strengths of member countries, the Forum has grown robustly. Its membership has enlarged and areas of cooperation have expanded over the years. ASEM members have benefited from close cooperation on issues of great importance to the development of the regions, such as the transfer of knowledge and best practices, and socio-cultural and intellectual exchanges.

But as we convene here today to commemorate ASEM's success, the world is witnessing profound transformation in all aspects as a result of scientific and technological breakthroughs, geo-economic and geo-political shifts, and the emergence of new, complex, inter-related traditional and non-traditional security challenges. Above all, the Covid-19 pandemic is causing a prolonged global health crisis, which is reshaping the way we live, work and interact with each others.

We also see numerous hurdles standing in the way of international cooperation, including protectionism, unilateralism, and behaviors that erode international laws for narrow-minded interests.

In such rapidly changing and complex world, Asia - Europe partnership and cooperation is more important than ever. It is, in fact, indispensable to the world's stability and prosperity.

Our regions are home to the world's biggest and most dynamic economies, accounting for 60% of the world population, 65% of the global GDP and 55% of the international trade; where many of the world's political, scientific and technology centers cluster. Our regions for decades have been the incubator of successful cooperation ideas at regional and global levels.

Indeed, there's ample room for ASEM partnership to expand since much of the tremendous potential for Asia - Europe cooperation remains untapped. Looking ahead, we need to make the most of Asia's fast-growing economies and Europe's strength as a global powerhouse of technology, science, creativity and innovations. This synergy can fuel the next phase of our joint incredible growth and development for the new era.

3.

But in the face of mounting challenges of the time, in order for ASEM to continue to succeed in the next 25 years, we need to demonstrate stronger resolve, take bolder actions, and choose an appropriate path to move forward. It is important for ASEM to prioritize areas that meet the development needs of its member countries, pay due attention to confidence-building measures, and contribute through concrete actions to the global restructuring process towards inclusive and sustainable development.

To this end, I wish to highlight three major objectives for ASEM cooperation in the coming decades:

First, ASEM needs to contribute to the maintenance of a favorable international environment of peace, stability, dialogue and trust. In this new era of development, we look forward to ASEM's expanded efforts to increase international understanding and build trust. ASEM should also play a critical role in promoting multilateralism and the UN-centered international system, upholding international law, and addressing global challenges. Moreover, the Forum needs to assert its pioneering role in helping shape a global governance system of greater effectiveness, fairness, and more democratic.

Second, ASEM should play a leading role and make greater efforts to enhance sustainable and inclusive development. Our top priority should be to support member countries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals under the 2030 Agenda, and to step up cooperation in such areas as climate change response, environmental protection, water resource management, circular economy, and high-quality human resource development.

Third, ASEM needs to lay a solid foundation for sustainable, enduring, and mutually beneficial economic ties between Asia and Europe. Enhancing Asia-Europe economic connectivity will bring benefits to all and needs to be implemented in sync across all sectors from trade, investment, finance, industries to regional connectivity and digital economy. Such endeavor has become highly relevant, particularly at a time when our economies are striving to rebound from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Viet Nam is a founding member of ASEM, and Asia-Europe cooperation continues to be a priority of Viet Nam's foreign policy. In the years to come, Viet Nam is committed to working closer with ASEM members in fostering the dynamic and thriving Asia-Europe partnership for global peace and stability, and for the prosperity of both continents.

Our dialogue today is a chance for us to take stock of our 25-year journey together and explore the different trajectories of cooperation in the future. It is high time we subscribe to a new vision which instills ASEM with new drivers and vitality and carve out for it a befitting role in the evolving regional and global architecture.

In this regard, I suggest that our deliberations today focus on the following key issues:

First, identify the major trends and factors that impact the Asia-Europe cooperation in the next decade as well as the difficulties and challenges ahead;

Second, position Asia-Europe cooperation in the new global landscape and explore how best we can deepen our engagement and cooperation. The current pandemic and global health crisis is a case in point. We could make greater efforts to assist one another in sharing, joint development and production of vaccines against Covid-19 as some of our members have done so generously in recent time.

This should be among the items high on ASEM's agenda. And I think all of us would appreciate such kind gestures of assistance in our individual and collective fights against Covid-19;

Last but not least, identify areas for cooperation and implementation measures so that ASEM can make the best use of its strength for our shared peace, stability, and prosperity in this transforming world. Preparedness for future health emergencies comes immediately to mind in this regard.

5.

*Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

With your active supports and insightful contributions, I am confident that our Dialogue will be a great success. The outcomes of our Dialogue today will provide valuable inputs to shape the vision and directions for the future of Asia-Europe cooperation at the upcoming 13th ASEM Summit.

Thank you./.