



REPÚBLICA
PORTUGUESA

GABINETE DO SECRETÁRIO DE ESTADO
DOS NEGÓCIOS ESTRANGEIROS E
COOPERAÇÃO

**Intervenção de S.Exa. SENEK no
Diálogo Político de Alto Nível da ASEM (“ASEM@25”)
Hanói, 22 de junho de 2021
“Strengthening Asia-Europa Partnership in a Transforming World”**

Your Excellency, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam, I thank you for your warm welcome,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to address, today, this distinguished audience at this landmark **High Level Policy Dialogue Meeting**, as we celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Asia-Europe Meeting. I am particularly pleased that this celebration has coincided with the **Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union**, which we are holding during the first semester of 2021.

As you are aware, **Portugal has many historical links with Asia**, that we very much value. We firmly believe in the importance of dialogue, of building bridges, consolidating regional alliances and international cooperation to overcome challenges.

As the **Portuguese Prime Minister said at the 12th ASEM Summit**, in Brussels, the Asia-Europe Meeting is an illustration of this. The past 25 years have shown the importance of ASEM in building bridges, enhancing dialogue and cooperation between Asia and Europe. This is indeed ASEM's great legacy and a very important asset for the future.



Excellencies,

COVID19 did remind us how interconnected and interdependent we are. It has impacted every country and region of the world and every aspect of our lives.

Working together became mandatory in finding ways of dealing with health, economic and social issues. Multilateralism regained force and meaning. As the UN Secretary-General pointed out, “no-one is safe until everyone is safe”.

That is why we very much look forward to our discussions at **13th ASEM Summit, in Phnom Penh, in November**, under the very much appropriate main theme “Strengthening Multilateralism for Shared Growth”.

A **strong EU-Asia relationship is crucial for our global recovery**. Going forward, Europe wants to expand its engagement with Asia - on how to strengthen economic cooperation, tackle global challenges and promote tangible/concrete cooperation between Asia and Europe.

Excellencies,

In ASEM, we should continue to promote **multilateral cooperation** on how to address global challenges emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic to climate change, from ocean governance to the digital transformation.

As a **maritime nation**, Portugal is fully committed to promoting the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas, and marine resources. As highlighted by Prime Minister António Costa, by the occasion of the **12th ASEM Summit**, “the Oceans are a unique common good”.



Due to the global Covid-19 pandemic and consequent public health concerns, the **2020 United Nations Ocean Conference**, which had been scheduled to take place in Lisbon in June last year, was postponed following a decision adopted by the UN General Assembly. Fortunately, in close consultation with the General Assembly, we have now reached a decision to hold the Conference in 2022, in dates to be confirmed very soon.

We also look forward to the **UN Biodiversity Convention (CBD COP 15)**, on 11-24 October 2021, and the **COP26** in Glasgow, on 1-12 November 2021. Our two regions will together need to accelerate efforts to reduce emissions, strengthen adaptation and resilience to the impacts of climate change, scale up finance and investments, protect and restore nature.

In 2016, during the Conference of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Portugal adopted the target of carbon neutrality by 2050, having developed a “Roadmap for Carbon Neutrality 2050”.

A **green and digital recovery** will be a key driver for growth, jobs, competitiveness, and trade for both our regions. We believe it would be important for ASEM partners to work together to “build back better” - i.e. more green, more sustainable, more inclusive way.

Connectivity has been a major plank of our ASEM cooperation recently and will continue to be so in the years to come. We would like to advance ASEM’s work on a sustainable approach to connectivity. This ground-breaking ASEM definition of connectivity was agreed at the 2018 ASEM Brussels Summit and was also a key Asia-Europe contribution to the 2019 G20 Osaka Summit’s adoption of Quality Infrastructure Principles. We will continue to favor a sustainable and rules-based approach to connectivity, built around transparency, local ownership as well as fiscal and environmental sustainability.



The European Union's commitment to **universal democratic rights and fundamental freedoms** will remain strong. Many Asian partners and certainly the people in this region share our view. Openness, stable and shared rules, and shared security are paramount for the prosperity of us all.

Certainly the world is getting a more challenging place. That is why the ASEM has traditionally and deliberately been an informal gathering of our Leaders, the right place aiming at working towards resolving some of the world's most intractable problems. At ASEM, the EU not only coordinates the positions of all its European partners, but has, as Europe, always reached consensus with all Asian partners in the lead up to summits. The EU will always be an ambitious and constructive ASEM partner.

Only last September, the five Foreign Ministers of Cambodia, the EU, Germany, Russia and Singapore succeeded in reaching consensus on an ASEM Host and Regional Coordinators statement on COVID-19, just showing what can be achieved in reaching consensus across the political spectrum.

The EU recently adopted a Strategy for cooperation in the region which is both broad based and inclusive. It ensures the EU can collaborate with any partner which seeks common ground. This strategy has been well received in Asia because all partners see Europe as a steady, reliable and non-threatening partner with no ulterior motive in the region except the wish to engender mutual prosperity.

In conclusion

We firmly believe **ASEM will remain a key platform** to promote dialogue and cooperation between Asia and Europe, in order to respond to common challenges ahead.



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I remain deeply convinced of the need for an even **stronger engagement** between European and Asian partners within the ASEM framework.

Thank you!