

Final Declaration of the 6th Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting

Brussels, Belgium, 27 September, 2010

1. The Sixth Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership meeting (ASEP VI) was held in Brussels, Belgium on September 26-28, 2010.
2. At the invitation of Mr. Danny PIETERS, Speaker of the Senate, and Mr. André FLAHAUT, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Parliamentarians from Belgium, Bulgaria, China, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Thailand, the United Kingdom and the European Parliament attended the Meeting. The European Commission, the Asia-Europe Foundation, the Asia-Europe Business Forum and the Asia-Europe People's Forum were invited to attend the Meeting as Guests of the Host Parliament.
3. Mr Steven VANACKERE, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belgium, who represented Mr. Yves LETERME, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium, and Mr. Herman VAN ROMPUY, President of the European Council, addressed the Meeting respectively as host and chair of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM 8) to be held in Brussels on October 4-5, 2010.
4. The host Speakers warmly welcomed the Parliamentarians and Guests to the Meeting as well as the delegations from the House and the Senate of Australia, the House of Representatives of New Zealand and the Russian State Duma and Federation Council who were invited as observers.
5. ASEP Parliamentarians expressed their deep sympathies over the casualties and victims of the fires in the Russian Federation, the floods in Pakistan and the landslides in China. They expressed the hope that life in the affected areas will soon be brought back to normal.
6. ASEP Parliamentarians expressed their commitment to peace, stability and prosperity in the ASEM area. They agreed that proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and their means of delivery, constitutes a threat to international peace and security and is a common concern. They reaffirmed their commitment to the objective of a world without nuclear weapons.

7. ASEP Parliamentarians recalled the previous five Meetings in Strasbourg (1996), Manila (2002), Hue City (2004), Helsinki (2006) and Beijing (2008), and held comprehensive, in-depth and fruitful discussions on a wide range of issues of shared interest and concern.

Economic challenges as a global opportunity to promote the quality of life of our populations

8. ASEP Parliamentarians deemed it important to take up the economic challenges and the economic and financial crisis as an opportunity to achieve greater wellbeing and dignity for all citizens, to raise the quality of life and to address what really matters to our societies and populations in Europe and Asia. This includes a reflection on how we can set up effective financial and economic world governance structures as well as on how we can guarantee social responsibility, food security, a sustainable economic development, a society based on the rule of law, education, energy security and environmental excellence.
9. Asia and Europe should move towards a more comprehensive, equal and mutually beneficial strategic partnership for sustainable development.

Sustainable Development

10. ASEP Parliamentarians reiterated and re-emphasised the achievements of the ASEP IV Declaration in Helsinki, where the following was stated: "ASEP Parliamentarians recognise the fact that all countries have a right to economic development. Therefore, sustainable development needs major and sustained efforts to promote economic growth within the carrying capacity of ecosystems by addressing and, where appropriate, de-linking economic growth from environmental degradation through improving efficiency and sustainability in the use of resources." They also underlined that all countries have a right to self-sufficiency regarding food.
11. ASEP Parliamentarians recalled the ASEP IV Helsinki Declaration stating that improved energy security and access to reliable, affordable, and environmentally sound energy services contribute to the eradication of poverty as called for in the Millennium Development Goals. Developed countries should take the lead in furthering sustainable development and assisting developing countries with this purpose both financially and technically.
12. ASEP Parliamentarians also recalled the ASEP V Beijing Declaration that reaffirmed the positive role of dialogue among cultures and civilisations in eradicating poverty, protecting the environment and promoting sustainable economic growth and common prosperity. They called on ASEM Partners

to work together, in a spirit of inclusiveness and dialogue, for a world featuring harmonious co-existence, equality, mutual respect and common development of different cultures and civilisations.

13. ASEP Parliamentarians welcomed the outcome of the ASEM 7 Summit in Beijing in October 2008 when ASEM partners agreed to strengthen co-operation in a mutually beneficial manner and to work towards a win-win solution contributing positively to sustainable development.
14. ASEP Parliamentarians noted that economic development, social progress and environmental protection are three mutually reinforcing and interdependent pillars of sustainable development and emphasised that the Millennium Development Goals, climate change and energy security, as well as social cohesion, are issues calling for special attention in achieving sustainable development.
15. ASEP Parliamentarians took note of the recommendations produced by the 2nd ASEM Development Conference held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia in May 2010 and welcomed Belgium's proposal to devote a specific preparatory event involving all ASEM partners to the topic of sustainable development, with a view to thoroughly prepare the coming ASEM 8 Summit statement on this issue.

a) Social Progress

16. ASEP Parliamentarians stressed that social cohesion rests on solidarity and on the widest possible participation of people in the creation of prosperity.
17. ASEP Parliamentarians took note of the ILO "Global Jobs Pact" of June 2009, supported by Asian and European ASEM members, which aims at creating jobs, protecting workers and stimulating economic recovery. ASEP Parliamentarians reiterated their support for the Pact and encouraged members to adopt its policy measures to ease the impact of the crisis and accelerate recovery in employment. More generally, social development is dependent upon the preservation of dignifying working conditions and respect for ILO labour standards.
18. ASEP Parliamentarians hence recognised that open consultative labour relations or equivalent mechanisms should be encouraged, for they generate mutual understanding between labour forces and employers about issues of productivity, working conditions and remuneration.
19. ASEP Parliamentarians deemed it important to take care of the protection of workers, particularly in times of crisis, through sustainable social security schemes.

Furthermore, it is of structural importance to ensure the long-term inclusiveness of labour markets. This requires sustained action by ASEM

Partners to promote education, job training, lifelong skill and career development tools and specific measures for the most vulnerable in order to help workers move into new job opportunities.

20. ASEP Parliamentarians looked forward to the ASEM Labour Ministers' meeting to be held in Leiden, Netherlands, in December 2010. This conference will build on the achievements of the ASEM dialogue in the employment and social fields, and will focus on how to turn the financial and economic crisis into an opportunity for creating jobs and strengthening social development at the global level.

21. ASEP Parliamentarians called for development co-operation to be strengthened through new and additional financial resources as well as through Official Development Assistance (ODA) in the bilateral and multilateral frameworks, in order to address the social dimension of development in developing countries. ASEP Parliamentarians called on developed countries to make concrete efforts towards the target of 0,7 % of their Gross National Income (GNI) for ODA, provided that international bodies exercise stricter control on the use of these funds.

ASEP Parliamentarians support the development of new co-operation strategies based on the trilateral co-operation model existing between the EU, Asia and Africa in order to promote between ASEM Partners a dynamic partnership that will encourage solidarity and grant priority to education and health.

22. The ASEM partners need to strengthen international co-operation for full and timely attainment of the Millennium Development Goals by, inter alia, pursuing the goal of poverty eradication based on the policies and strategies of developing countries, according to the Doha Strategy.

23. ASEP Parliamentarians considered that, in order to achieve economic development and social progress, it is necessary to respect fundamental rights and freedoms, especially the freedom from poverty and the right to choose the way of development.

24. ASEM Parliamentarians stress the need to give priority to gender equality and empowerment of women. There must be progress on reduction of maternal mortality and improving maternal and reproductive health. They totally condemn the awful practice of abuse of women and children as a weapon of war.

25. ASEP Parliamentarians insisted to guarantee the promotion of women's rights in every human society. Gender equity naturally means the promotion of women's status in the political, economical, cultural and social fields.

26. ASEP Parliamentarians affirmed that cultural diversity is a fundamental feature of world cultures and constitutes a true source of innovation, inspiration and progress for humankind; they also emphasized that respect

for, protection and promotion of cultural identities and diversity, together with dialogue among civilizations, have been a driving force for development, putting special emphasis on gender equality.

b) Economic Development

27. ASEP Parliamentarians recognised that private sources of demand must be re-established as the main drivers of growth across countries, and called on ASEM partners to encourage structural adjustment to achieve this, including through increased consumer consumption and confidence, nourished by increasing wages, market liberalisation and innovation of products, services and production processes.

28. ASEP Parliamentarians also agreed on the need to enhance co-operation in the fields of technological innovation, science and ICT so as to narrow the digital divide and ensure sustainable development for all ASEM partners. ASEP Parliamentarians considered that transportation offers specific opportunities to expand economic relations. Hence, they deemed it necessary to provide remedies to this economic sector suffering from specific choking points. Possible solutions could consist in developing infrastructure, simplifying procedures and promoting multimodal schemes and further liberalisation.

ASEP Parliamentarians noted the past and constructive activities within the different working groups under the Trade Facilitation Action Plan and the Investment Promotion Action Plan. They welcomed the progress made in the ASEM customs working group, as highlighted in the Heraklion Declaration adopted by the 8th ASEM Customs Director Generals (DGs)/Commissioners meeting. In particular, they appreciated its achievements in the area of trade facilitation (i.e. establishing a dialogue with the ASEM business community, TFAP on customs matters) and confirmed the need to further step up customs IPR enforcement and cooperation amongst ASEM members.

ASEP Parliamentarians shared the view that co-operation on economic development should be strengthened, following what was decided upon at the 1st High Level ASEM Conference in Manila, Philippines, in April 2009.

c) Environmental Protection and Climate Change

29. ASEP Parliamentarians remembered former ASEP Declarations, stressing that environmental protection mobilises increasingly with combating climate change, recognised as the most pressing threat, which has to be continuously addressed after the Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen of December 2009.

30. Following what was examined at the 1st ASEM Energy Ministerial in Brussels, Belgium, June 2009, ASEP Parliamentarians also encouraged energy saving, energy efficiency and conversion to renewable, carbon-free, sources of energy to be pursued. They can be supported by market policies that should however at the same time preserve the energy security of the respective countries.
31. ASEP Parliamentarians also noted that human activity affects other aspects of the environment as well. These too need to be addressed. In practice, the involvement of civil society in the design and implementation of protection measures goes a long way in changing people's attitudes. A more widespread availability and adoption of green technologies would likewise help preserve the earth's resources and environment for future generations and perhaps open an era of new 'green growth' opportunities with a positive effect on economic development. In this regard, the developed countries shall fulfil their commitment of technology transfer under the UNFCCC.
32. They supported in this context the Green Economy Initiative of the United Nations Environment Program which should ensure that stimulus packages are used to promote investments for sustainable long-term growth, creation of decent jobs, and poverty reduction.

Effective Financial and Economic World Governance Structures

33. ASEP Parliamentarians reiterated the conclusions of the ASEM V Conference in Beijing in June 2008 when participants already "called on ASEM partners to increase dialogue and co-operation on financial policies to jointly safeguard stability of the regional financial markets" and to encourage "finance ministers of Asia and Europe to explore effective measures to deepen financial co-operation between the two regions".
34. ASEP Parliamentarians reaffirmed the engagement taken by ASEM leaders at the ASEM 7 Summit in Beijing in October 2008, who "called on the international community to continue to strengthen coordination and co-operation and take effective and available economic and financial measures in a comprehensive way to restore market confidence, stabilize global financial markets and promote global economic growth."
35. ASEP Parliamentarians welcomed the conclusions of the ASEM Finance Ministers' Meeting in Madrid in April 2010 dedicated to the theme of effective global governance.
36. ASEP Parliamentarians agreed that the international community needs to enhance an open, equitable, rule-based and non discriminatory multilateral trade system embodied in the WTO, recognising that such a system is the most effective way in developing trade relations and increasing economic opportunities among ASEM partners. ASEP Parliamentarians noted in

particular the need for practical co-operation initiatives aimed at expanding trade and investment, and promoting partnership and co-operation between ASEM partners in areas of mutual benefit including, inter alia, culture, education, health, finance, transportation, energy, science, high technology, agriculture, forestry and fishery, information and telecommunication, environmental engineering and tourism.

37. ASEP Parliamentarians insisted on pushing for concrete results in reforming global financial and economic governance. They deemed it necessary to make full use of the G20 platform for strengthening macroeconomic policy co-ordination, and to move forward the WTO Doha Round negotiations to achieve ambitious, balanced and prompt conclusion to the Doha Development Agenda, consistent with its mandate, built on the progress achieved, including with regards to modalities. They encouraged ASEM partners to stand firm against all forms of trade protectionism, so as to prevent a relapse in the present global economic recovery, as well as to harmonize rules on workers' rights and the environment.

38. ASEP Parliamentarians underlined the importance of implementing as early as possible the reform targets for the IMF and World Bank regarding their role and mandate. They stressed the need to improve the existing decision-making procedures and mechanisms in international financial institutions, to reflect the relative weights of their members in the world economy, which have changed substantially in view of the strong growth in dynamic emerging and developing economies, and to preserve the stability of the international monetary and financial system. They also stressed the importance of ensuring that the quantitative target of IMF quota reform is met before the G20 Summit in Seoul.

They supported the reform process of the international financial supervision system under the auspices of the IMF, the G20 and the Financial Stability Board. They recognised the need for more even-handed and effective surveillance of systemically important firms, international capital flows and financial markets.

Financial companies have to shoulder their own responsibility in the current situation in order to adjust to evolving market conditions and to the new supervisory arrangements and regulatory environment currently under construction. ASEP Parliamentarians noted that taxes on financial institutions are being introduced in European countries; they also noted that there are a number of possible policy approaches regarding financial sector contributions.

39. ASEP Parliamentarians welcomed the next G20 meeting, which is planned in Seoul –the first to take place in a non G8 country– in November 2010, where important decisions will be taken on measures required to face the global financial and economic crisis.

40. ASEP parliamentarians welcomed the programs for economic revival developed by ASEM partners. The EU 2020 strategy, which focuses on

5 targets (employment, research and development, climate change and energy, education, combating poverty), should create the best conditions for stable economic growth with a balanced distribution of profits. Similarly, ASEP parliamentarians emphasised the importance of a closer economic co-operation in Asia i.a. through promoting regional integration between ASEAN and FTA partners comprising Australia, China, India, Japan, Korea and New Zealand, and the implementation of the ASEAN Charter which is envisaging the creation by 2015 of an ASEAN single free-trade area for the region encompassing 500 million people.

41. ASEP Parliamentarians reminded that stimulus packages still sustain economic activity in various countries. These packages have engendered significant public deficits in some countries with consequences for the world economy as a whole. They emphasised the importance of good management of national budget deficits and public debts in order to prevent a new economic crisis and to re-launch the economic growth, also considering the risk that a premature restrictive fiscal policy might cause to the global economic recovery. International aid plans, financed by the European Union or by Asian multilateral institutions, must be encouraged in order to provide support - if needed - to countries of the ASEM partnership who are confronted with huge public deficits.
42. ASEP Parliamentarians encouraged enhanced regional and sub-regional integration processes between ASEM partners, consistent with WTO rules and commitments, including through regional development banks, regional trade arrangements, regional free trade agreements and regional financial and monetary integration initiatives – such as the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralisation Agreement of ASEAN +3, the Asian Bond Markets Initiative and the European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism – as part of a global coordinated efficient response to deal with the current crisis. They underlined the sensitivity of regional and sub-regional institutions to the specific needs of their constituencies, and the greater equitable representation of developing countries within these bodies.
43. ASEP Parliamentarians welcomed Belgium's initiative to hold a dynamic Asia-Europe Business Forum (AEBF) in parallel with the ASEM 8 Summit in Brussels on 4-5 October 2010, encouraging economic co-operation between the business sectors of Asia and Europe. AEBF 12 will focus on the financial sector and themes such as financial stability, the integrated market for financial services and the growing role of Asia on the world financial stage will be on the agenda.
44. ASEP Parliamentarians encouraged the coming ASEM 8 Summit to produce a statement on ASEM initiatives to address the issue of economic and financial global governance.

Piracy at sea

45. ASEP Parliamentarians noted with concern that piracy at sea is taking on disturbing proportions on the routes linking Europe and Asia, particularly in the waters off the coast of Somalia and the Gulf of Aden. This can have far reaching consequences in addition to the obvious disruption of trade between Asia and Europe. A joined action of ASEM Members to fight against this scourge would symbolise the efficiency of ASEM partnership. Therefore, they welcomed the results of the ASEM Seminar on Piracy at Sea (Brussels, May 2010), which provided a basis for further discussion by ASEM Partners in addressing this specific issue.

People To People Relations

46. ASEP Parliamentarians agreed that people to people relations are the ultimate foundation of long-lasting and robust relationships between Asia and Europe. Leaders should consider measures to build and expand the useful work performed by ASEP, ASEM's only established institution. ASEP Parliamentarians appreciated the fact that a permanent goal of ASEM is to bring an ever growing number of business travellers, tourists, academicians, students, opinion makers, civil society representatives and local and regional leaders to know and understand each other better.

47. ASEP Parliamentarians welcomed the expansion of academic co-operation under the care of the Ministers of Education and of relevant organisations. They applauded the holding of Bologna Policy fora that stimulate dialogue on mobility, quality assurance, credit recognition and credit transfer, building on the success of programs such as the Erasmus Mundus and the ASEM-DUO fellowship programs. They strongly supported the establishment of the ASEM Education Secretariat in Bonn, Germany, which will co-ordinate ASEM educational activities.

48. Similarly, ASEP Parliamentarians encouraged progress in cultural co-operation and exchanges, at the behest of the Ministers for Culture who now meet regularly and welcomed the outcome of the ASEM Culture Ministers' Meeting held in Poznan, Poland, on 9-10 September 2010.

49. Besides, ASEP Parliamentarians welcomed the fact that interfaith and interreligious dialogue has contributed much to bring Europeans and Asians closer together on an agenda of tolerance and mutual understanding, as exemplified by the 5th ASEM Interfaith dialogue organised in Seoul, Korea, in September 2009 and the 6th ASEM Interfaith dialogue held in Toledo/Madrid, Spain, in April 2010. Efforts need to be made globally to combat phobia, particularly the attitudes amongst some people against all religions.

Reinforcement and Enlargement of our Asia-Europe Partnership

50. ASEP Parliamentarians agreed that a continuous reinforcement of the Asia-Europe partnership is mutually beneficial and guarantees the continuity in the ASEP process.

Therefore ASEP Parliamentarians expressed their wish to develop the ASEP process further, to strengthen the leadership and to establish follow-up mechanisms of the meetings, as well as to monitor how the governments have worked with issues ASEP has given a priority to, and to be active and visible in between ASEP meetings. They also emphasised the importance of the following priorities: a leadership for ASEP based on the host country as chair, assisted by the previous and the future host, the report by the host country at the ASEP meeting on the progress made in the ASEM process in between ASEP meetings and the encouragement of member parliaments to take measures to improve the continuity of the ASEP work on a national level.

51. ASEP Parliamentarians believed it could be useful for ASEM to reassess its working methods in order to pursue equality of partnership, open process, dialogue leading to co-operation and to connected action and informality, as practised so far.

52. ASEP Parliamentarians stressed the importance of a broad dialogue between European and Asian countries in facing common challenges and therefore encouraged signs of interest of candidate partners willing to join ASEP. ASEP parliamentarians highlighted the importance that the ASEM convictions are shared by the largest possible population.

Final clauses

53. ASEP Parliamentarians asked the Belgian ASEP chairs to transmit the present declaration to the forthcoming ASEM summit to be held in Brussels on 4 and 5 October 2010.

54. ASEP Parliamentarians agreed to hold the next ASEP in 2012 in Vientiane, in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and looked forward to their reunion in two years' time.