



## **Asia-Europe Meeting**

### **Senior Officials' Meeting**

**22-23 June 2017, Brussels**

#### **Chair's Summary**

ASEM Senior Officials met on 22-23 June 2017 in Brussels. The ASEM SOM was hosted and chaired by the European Union and attended by all ASEM Partners as well as the Asia Europe Foundation (ASEF).

The primary purpose of the ASEM SOM was to engage in a strategic discussion on the future of ASEM and to prepare the upcoming 13<sup>th</sup> ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting, to be held on 21-22 November in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

The discussion was structured around four agenda items:

#### **1. How to enhance the relevance of ASEM in a fast changing global context?**

SOMs leaders discussed and agreed that recent international developments have enhanced the importance of ASEM as key pillar in support of the rules-based international order. Europe and Asia have a shared interest in ensuring ASEM's continued relevance. Accordingly, SOM leaders agreed to maximise the potential of ASEM's new momentum so that it can reach its full potential.

To this end and making full use of ASEM's informal and flexible nature, SOM leaders agreed that ASEM should move with the times, ensuring efficient working methods and substantive agendas, focused on strategic challenges where ASEM can make a difference with the objective to produce tangible results.

ASEM SOM leaders discussed and agreed on the need for future ASEM Chair Statements to be significantly shortened. Future statements should concentrate on key principles and avoid renegotiating issues that are already being dealt with in other fora. The role and prerogatives of the Chair were underlined, to capture the consensus or, if this proves elusive, to describe in a factual manner the views expressed on the areas where full consensus could not be reached.

The Meeting agreed to follow these new guidelines for the outcome documents of both the 13<sup>th</sup> ASEM FMM and the 12<sup>th</sup> ASEM Summit.

The Meeting also underlined the importance of enhancing the ASEM experience not just for political leaders but also for civil society, business and the younger generation while maximising media exposure.

Finally, the Meeting agreed that in future informal ASEM events (fora, symposiums, seminars etc) should produce Chair Summary Reports rather than issue formal statements or declarations.

## **2. ASEM as a platform for strategic cooperation.**

SOM leaders received a report on the outcome of the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the ASEM Pathfinder Group on Connectivity (APGC, see separate Chair's Summary Report). The next meeting of the APGC will be held back-to-back with the next ASEM Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) in Nay Pyi Taw in Myanmar in September. China and Japan will inform Partners on the decision regarding the co-chairmanship of the APGC on the Asian side. On the European side co-chairmanship will be exercised by the EU and the rotating Presidency.

SOM leaders discussed the preparations of the 13<sup>th</sup> ASEM FMM whose agenda could be structured around three broad clusters:

- global challenges (e.g. SDGs, climate change, rules-based trade),
- common security challenges (counter-terrorism, de-radicalisation, maritime security, cyber security and cyber freedom),
- regional and international issues (in and around Europe, Asia and the wider Middle East; cooperation on Africa).

The Meeting agreed on the importance of allocating ample time for informal dialogue, making optimal use of retreats and bilateral meetings. SOM leaders will prepare the 13<sup>th</sup> ASEM FMM by identifying a selected number of principles and key messages to be presented as outcome through a short, balanced and readable statement, focused on issues under the purview of ASEM Foreign Ministers.

## **3. ASEM: future calendar of Meetings**

SOM leaders received updates on the state of preparation of the following ASEM Ministerial meetings:

- 6th ASEM Economic Ministers' Meeting (ASEM EMM6), Seoul, South Korea, 21-22 September 2017
- 4th ASEM Transport Ministers' Meeting (ASEM TMM4), Bali, Indonesia, 26-28 September 2017

- 6th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEM ME6), Seoul, South Korea,  
21-22 November 2017

The meeting also received indications of ASEM partners of their intentions to host the following Ministerial Meetings:

- 13th Asia-Europe Finance Ministers' Meeting (ASEM FinMM13), Bulgaria  
(first half of 2018, precise date tbc)

- 8th ASEM Culture Ministers' Meeting (ASEM CMM8), Bulgaria, (first half of 2018,  
precise date tbc)

- 7<sup>th</sup> ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEM ME7), Romania, (first half of 2019,  
precise date tbc)

- 14<sup>th</sup> ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting (ASEM FMM14), Spain, (second half of 2019,  
precise date tbc)

4. At the occasion of ASEF's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, SOMs received a briefing by the Executive Director of ASEF on recent and future ASEF projects aimed at strengthening people-to-people contacts between Europe and Asia.

The meeting also received a briefing by the CEO of "BOZAR" (the Brussels' Centre for Fine Arts) on its work and initial suggestions for cultural projects that could be implemented in the run up to the ASEM12 Summit in Brussels.

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