



Asia-Europe Meeting

ASEM12 - BRUSSELS 2018

***'Global Partners for Global Challenges'***

**Chair's Statement**

**INTRODUCTION**

1. The **12<sup>th</sup> Asia-Europe Meeting** (ASEM12) was held on 18-19 October 2018 in Brussels, Belgium, hosted by the European Union and chaired by the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk. The meeting was attended by the Heads of State and Government, or their high-level representatives, of 51 Asian and European countries, the President of the European Commission and the Secretary-General of ASEAN.
2. Under the theme "**Global Partners for Global Challenges**" Leaders addressed key opportunities and challenges facing Europe and Asia in a world of accelerating change. They stressed the role of ASEM as the main platform for Europe and Asia to strengthen dialogue, foster cooperation including on multilateralism and tackle global challenges together. They recalled the main principles of ASEM - informality, flexibility, mutual respect in the spirit of consensus, equal partnership and mutual benefit - and underlined their commitment to keep the ASEM process open and further improve ASEM's functioning and enhance its impact and visibility for citizens across Europe and Asia.
3. Leaders stressed that recent international developments have boosted the relevance of **ASEM as a building block for effective multilateralism and the rules-based international order** anchored in international law and with the United Nations at its core. They expressed their resolve to work together for peace, security, sustainable development and prosperity, based on respect for international law including the promotion and protection of human rights in accordance with the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the relevant international human rights law, international humanitarian law, treaties and instruments. They highlighted the vital need of maintaining an open world economy and upholding the rules-based multilateral trading system, with the World Trade Organization at its core. Leaders stressed their commitment to comply with WTO rules, cooperating on rendering its dispute settlement system more effective, and redoubling on-going efforts aimed at WTO reform.
4. Leaders noted with appreciation the outcomes of the **ASEM Ministerial meetings** held since the ASEM11 Summit (Ulaanbaatar, July 2016) in the areas of Economy (Seoul, September 2017), Transport (Bali, September 2017), Foreign Affairs (Nay Pyi Taw, November 2017), Education (Seoul, November 2017), Culture (Sofia, March 2018) and Finance (Sofia, April 2018). Leaders also noted the full set of recent official ASEM events and initiatives and future

ministerial meetings, which taken together demonstrate the important added value that the ASEM framework brings.

5. Leaders stressed their commitment to implement fully the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and its Sustainable Development Goals and Addis Ababa Action Agenda with the aim of eradicating poverty and building an inclusive and sustainable future for all, with no one left behind and a strong focus on reaching the most vulnerable. Leaders emphasised the role of young people in contributing to sustainable development and the role that various stakeholders can play in pursuing social and economic inclusion, sustainable societies and people-centred development and the importance of public-private partnerships. Leaders also underlined the significance of science, technology and innovation cooperation in accomplishing the 2030 Agenda and tackling global challenges in a sustainable way.
6. Leaders expressed their resolve to tackle the growing threats to the **environment** and acknowledged the need to act in an ambitious and concerted manner to better ensure its protection. Leaders expressed their support for bi-regional cooperation such as that between the Danube and Mekong regions as a model of how to transform transboundary water management and food security challenges into opportunities for sustainable development.
7. They reiterated that **gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls** are crucial to sustainable development and must be mainstreamed in all three pillars of ASEM (political; economic and financial; social-cultural). They agreed that women's empowerment is about the realisation of human rights for all and drives growth and poverty reduction. Leaders reiterated their determination to strengthen efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, including trafficking and other forms of exploitation. They agreed to champion female leadership, advance women's empowerment and ensure full participation of women in political and other decision-making processes.
8. Leaders underlined the link between **ASEM connectivity** and sustainable development for achieving the 2030 Agenda. They underlined the shared interest of all ASEM partners in strengthening Europe-Asia sustainable connectivity across ASEM's three pillars, as a means of bringing countries, people and societies closer together.

Leaders welcomed the adoption at the ASEM FMM13 of the ASEM definition of Connectivity and recalled its main elements including the need to uphold market principles and agreed international rules, norms and standards. They welcomed ongoing efforts to boost ASEM connectivity including in the context of the ASEM Pathfinder Group on Connectivity, which has fulfilled its mandate. They decided that further work on connectivity should be pursued notably on the basis of the APGC final report, in the framework of the future Senior Officials' Meetings. Leaders noted the EU's work on the ASEM Sustainable Connectivity Portal, as well as the Inventory of ASEM Connectivity, as inputs to develop ASEM's role in this field.

9. Leaders recognised the serious challenge posed by **climate change**, its tremendous impact felt world-wide and the need for urgent and effective action by all countries in line with the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Leaders noted the findings of the IPCC Special Report, which unequivocally confirmed the negative impact of global warming. They expressed their profound concern that current global efforts are insufficient to meet the temperature goal of the Paris Agreement. Leaders emphasized that mitigation of and adaptation to climate change represent immediate and urgent priorities. Leaders reaffirmed their strong commitment to the Paris Agreement, moving swiftly towards its full implementation and completing its work programme this year at COP 24 in Katowice (Poland) – with the implementation to reflect equity and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances.

Leaders also agreed to work together to strengthen the global response to climate change, through ambitious climate actions in clean energy, including renewable energy, energy efficiency and other low-emission technologies, industry, transportation, agriculture and forestry, innovation, mobilisation of finance, prevention of deforestation, desertification, including water scarcity, resilience, disaster management and risk reduction.

10. Leaders underlined their commitment to uphold the **global non-proliferation regime** and to ensure the full implementation of the obligations derived from all relevant international instruments and the UN Security Council Resolutions, as well as the importance of nuclear safety.
11. Leaders underlined that the development of inter-Korean relations, the complete denuclearisation of, and the peace regime on the **Korean Peninsula** are important for peace, security and stability, not only in East Asia but also for the entire world. Leaders welcomed RoK's efforts and other partners' diplomatic initiatives to achieve lasting peace and stability on a Korean Peninsula free of nuclear weapons. They welcomed recent developments on the Korean Peninsula, in particular the three inter-Korean Summits and the US-DPRK Summit. They supported the full and expeditious implementation of the Panmunjom Declaration and Pyongyang Joint Declaration, as well as of the Singapore Joint Statement by the United States and DPRK, which confirm the common goal of complete denuclearisation and the establishment of a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula.

Leaders called on the DPRK to completely, verifiably and irreversibly dismantle all its nuclear and other Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), ballistic missiles and related programmes and facilities in accordance with the relevant UNSC resolutions; and also called on the DPRK to fulfil its commitment made to complete denuclearisation. They are committed to supporting a comprehensive solution through diplomacy and fully implementing the UNSC resolutions, including restrictive measures.

In this context, they urged the DPRK to return to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and IAEA safeguards at an early date and to cooperate with its monitoring system.

They acknowledged that the ongoing diplomatic efforts to resolve the issues relating to the DPRK should also contribute to the improvement of the human rights and humanitarian situation in the DPRK, including the abductions issue.

12. With regard to **Iran**, Leaders reiterated their collective support for diplomatic dialogue and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action endorsed by the UN Security Council in Resolution 2231 which is working and delivering on its goal, namely to ensure the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme. Leaders recognised that, alongside full and effective implementation by Iran of its nuclear related commitments, the lifting of sanctions including the consequences arising from it constitutes an essential part of the JCPOA. Preserving the nuclear deal with Iran is a matter of respecting international agreements, and promoting international security, peace and stability.
13. Leaders also exchanged views on the ways to promote and strengthen cooperation on **peace and security** issues of common interest and concern including Afghanistan, Syria, the Middle East and North Africa, Ukraine (UN Security Council Resolution 2202).

Leaders reaffirmed their full support for UNSC resolution 2166.

14. Leaders welcomed the successful outcome of the 32<sup>nd</sup> **ASEAN** Summit held in Singapore on 25-28 April 2018. They commended ASEAN's endeavours in expanding its relations with partners and welcomed the interest of the European ASEM partners in furthering engagement with the region through all ASEAN-led processes.

#### **PILLAR 1: PARTNERS FOR POLITICAL AND SECURITY CHALLENGES**

15. Leaders committed to enhancing ASEM cooperation on **Information and Communication Technologies** (ICT), and digital connectivity through trust and confidence building on the basis of applicable provisions of international law and universal norms, rules and principles for responsible state behaviour. They underlined the need for an open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful ICT environment. They stressed the importance of combating cyber security threats, preventing potential use of ICT for criminal or terrorist purposes while protecting human rights and freedoms online and respecting applicable domestic and international legal frameworks for privacy and data protection.
16. Leaders underlined that **terrorism** in all forms and manifestations constitutes a serious threat to international peace and security and that acts of terrorism are unjustifiable regardless of motivations, whenever and by whomsoever committed. Leaders underscored the need for balanced and integrated implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Leaders committed to enhancing collaboration in ASEM to tackle radicalisation leading to violence, terrorism financing, abuse of the Internet by terrorist groups, terrorist recruitment, foreign terrorist fighters and transnational crime. They underscored that preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism is essential. Leaders also emphasised that measures taken to counter terrorism must comply with all states' obligations under international law in particular international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law.

Leaders acknowledged that women can play an important role in this regard. They called for progress in the negotiations on the UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism.

17. Leaders underlined that **migration** flows represent a global challenge and need a multilevel response. They noted that safe, orderly and regular migration can contribute positively to growth and sustainable development in countries of origin, transit and destination. They stressed that stemming irregular migration requires a comprehensive international response, based on solidarity, greater global responsibility and coordinated shared actions including all countries' obligations to readmit their own citizens, and through agreed regular pathways for migration while respecting national competences. Leaders expressed concern over the unprecedented humanitarian emergencies linked to irregular migration flows, forced displacement and the migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings occurring in Asia and Europe, and committed to intensifying efforts to jointly address these challenges as partners. Leaders also stressed the need to tackle these root causes of irregular migration. They stressed the importance of promoting and ensuring full respect for human rights of all people on the move and to guarantee the protection of refugees and forcibly displaced people. Leaders took note of the discussion at UN level, notably on the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact for Refugees, which can contribute to strengthening the international response to migration flows and refugee situations.
18. Leaders stressed the importance of finding a comprehensive and durable solution to address the root causes of the conflict in **Rakhine State** and commended Bangladesh for sheltering displaced persons. Leaders looked forward to the implementation of the Arrangement on Return of Displaced Persons from Rakhine State between Myanmar and Bangladesh signed on 23 November 2017, and of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed among Myanmar, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on 6 June 2018. Leaders underlined the need to establish conducive conditions for the safe, voluntary, dignified, and sustainable return and reintegration of displaced persons to Rakhine State. They underlined the importance of accountability and took note of the national and international efforts in this regard. The Leaders expressed their continued support to bring peace, stability, rule of law, and reconciliation among various communities, as well as to ensure sustainable and equitable development in Rakhine State.
19. Leaders underscored their commitment to clean and sustainably managed oceans, to forge partnerships and promote improved global **ocean governance** and sustainable blue growth. They committed to tackling challenges related to ocean governance due to climate change, unsustainable use of oceans and their resources, including Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IUUF) on the environment and the economy. Leaders expressed their concern about the rapid increase of plastic litter in the ocean and stressed the importance of the elimination of discharge of litter and micro-plastic to the oceans as agreed within the UN framework. They agreed to prioritise international cooperation on waste

prevention and waste management and move towards efficient and sustainable shipping.

20. Leaders reaffirmed their commitment to maintain peace and stability and to ensure **maritime security and safety**, freedom of navigation and overflight and to combat piracy in full compliance with international law. They underlined the critical importance of peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with international law, in particular the UN Charter and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), of refraining from the threat or use of force and unilateral actions that are against international law, in particular UNCLOS and of pursuing confidence building measures, and self-restraint.

## **PILLAR 2: PARTNERS FOR ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL CHALLENGES**

21. Leaders reaffirmed strong support for preserving and strengthening **the rules-based multilateral trading system** centred on the World Trade Organization (WTO). They reconfirmed the conclusions of the 7<sup>th</sup> ASEM Economic Ministers' Meeting (ASEM EMM7), including on trade and investment facilitation. Leaders underlined their joint commitment to open, free, and non-discriminatory trade, as a prerequisite for long term growth and prosperity. They reiterated the need to further strengthen, and reform the WTO to help it meet new challenges and to improve its transparency, monitoring, dispute settlement mechanism, and its rulemaking functions. They committed to ensure free and open trade on a level-playing field and fight all forms of protectionism, including protectionist unilateral measures and unfair trade practices. Leaders underlined the importance of implementing and enforcing obligations under the WTO by its members, including the ongoing work to implement its Trade Facilitation Agreement.
22. Leaders noted the importance of the steady synchronisation of **global growth**, supported by strong domestic and external demand, as noted at the 13<sup>th</sup> ASEM Finance Ministers' Meeting (ASEM FinMM13). They reaffirmed their commitment to address the main emerging risks to the global economy: the retreat from cross-border integration, financial vulnerabilities and structurally low economic growth. Leaders also underlined the impact of global climate change on economic growth. They stressed the importance of strengthening ASEM cooperation on cross-border trade and investment so as to promote decent jobs in particular for the youth and tackling global challenges in a sustainable way. To ensure better connectivity between Europe and Asia they also stressed the importance of developing and strengthening transport systems and infrastructure that are environmentally, socially and fiscally sustainable, financially viable, affordable and accessible and are in accordance with relevant international standards. In this regard, leaders agreed to promote transparency, a level playing field and innovative funding mechanisms.
23. Leaders highlighted the importance of continued structural efforts towards deeper **economic integration**, both at the regional and global level. They stressed the importance of promoting processes of regional economic integration and facilitating their interaction. They pointed out the need to ensure public and private debt sustainability and take measures in support of private debt

deleveraging. Leaders underlined the importance of cooperation among regional financial institutions to ensure sustainable economic growth.

24. Leaders emphasised the positive role that **Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises** (MSMEs) can bring to promoting balanced and inclusive growth, innovation and an economy based on low greenhouse gas emissions. They underscored the importance of harnessing the opportunities offered by technological change and the 4th Industrial Revolution, as noted by Ministers at the 7<sup>th</sup> ASEM Economic Ministers' Meeting (ASEM EMM7). Leaders stressed the importance of better access to digital infrastructure for MSMEs to participate in regional and global value chains.
25. Leaders highlighted ASEM's role in boosting **women's economic empowerment**, notably through successful policies and appropriate legal provisions. They committed to eliminate discrimination, improve women's access to labour markets and the global economy, and reduce the gender gap in political, economic, corporate and public life - with the goal of eliminating those gaps by 2030, including by championing women leaders, boosting women's entrepreneurship, financial literacy and maximising the use of new technologies.
26. Leaders highlighted benefits from the growing **digital economy** including lower barriers to entry, reduced transaction costs and improved productivity. Leaders recognised the need to work together to find solutions to the challenges stemming from the rapid expansion of the digital economy and technological changes notably the fight against tax avoidance, evasion and fraud. They re-confirmed the commitment of ASEM Finance Ministers (at ASEM FinMM13) to address challenges related to international taxation and domestic resource mobilisation. Leaders recognised the need to review two key aspects of the existing tax framework, namely profit allocation and nexus rules, with a view to aligning taxation with value creation. ASEM Leaders will contribute to global discussions within the UN, the G20 and the OECD, and look forward to ambitious, effective and consensus-based solutions to address the impacts of the digitalisation of the economy on the international tax system by 2020, with an update in 2019.

### **PILLARS 3: PARTNERS FOR SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LINKS**

27. Leaders recognised the importance of access to **quality education** as a basic human right and a tool for responsible citizenship, economic prosperity and resilience of society, and reaffirmed the conclusions of the 6<sup>th</sup> ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEM ME6). Leaders also recognised the value of involving business and industry in official education, and of enhancing the use of digital tools in teaching and learning. Leaders recalled the role of lifelong learning, including Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and human resources development to ensure employability by providing individuals with the skills needed to thrive in a globalised and digitalised world. They recognised mobility schemes, including the Erasmus+ programme, the Marie Skłodowska-Curie scholarships and the ASEM-DUO Fellowship Programme.

Leaders reiterated that the ASEM Education process aims at inclusion and equality by building comprehensive education systems, accessible to all. Leaders

stressed that no one must be left behind and committed to address the needs of all, notably those with disabilities, with disadvantaged socio-economic and migrant backgrounds, as well as the most talented learners.

Leaders committed to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment by supporting quality education for all, gender-sensitive and transformative policies addressing the multiple challenges that girls and women face, including multiple forms of discrimination, limited access to economic and social opportunities, as well as essential services, such as healthcare. In furtherance of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Leaders expressed support for expanding opportunities for girls to access twelve years of quality education taking into account national circumstances. They highlighted the importance of female participation in science technology engineering and mathematics (STEM).

28. Leaders underlined the importance of **sustainable tourism** as a catalyst for people-to-people connectivity, economic cooperation and quality-job creation. Leaders committed to promote and strengthen cooperation on sustainable tourism across the two regions, including conservation and management of cultural and natural heritage, the environment and its bio-diversity, by sharing best practices and expertise, conducting trainings and building capacity.

29. Leaders reiterated the importance of **cultural diplomacy** and recognised cultural cooperation as an engine for social and economic development, especially by fostering city-to-city cooperation and maximising opportunities stemming from the European Capitals of Culture, East Asia Cities of Culture, the ASEAN City of Culture and other similar initiatives as noted at the 8th ASEM Culture Ministers' Meeting (ASEM CMM8). Leaders welcomed the launching of the ASEM Cultural Festival (18-30 October, Brussels) under the theme "Europe meets Asia, Asia meets Europe", in conjunction with ASEM 12 Summit. Leaders welcomed the principle of having regular ASEM Cultural Festivals in connection with ASEM Summits and ASEM Foreign Minister Meetings to strengthen inter-cultural dialogue among ASEM partners, including the mobility of artists and culture professionals, through exchanges and peer-to-peer learning. Leaders also noted the importance of promoting inter-religious dialogue as one of major factors ensuring connectivity between Asia and Europe.

30. Leaders commended the work of the **Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)** in Singapore, whose activities and contributions complement the government-led ASEM process, by fostering people-to-people contacts and focusing on civil society and especially the youth. Leaders called on ASEF to continue to closely align its activities with ASEM priorities. They underlined the importance to enhance ASEF and ASEM visibility through the ASEM InfoBoard with its social media platforms.

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31. Leaders thanked the Chair and the Host for the successful outcome of the 12<sup>th</sup> ASEM Summit (ASEM12) in Brussels and for the warm hospitality accorded to all its participants. Leaders look forward to the 13<sup>th</sup> ASEM Summit (ASEM13) to be held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in 2020.