

ASIA AND EUROPE: IN SEARCH OF A NEW PARTNERSHIP

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Abstract

Established by 25 participating states in Bangkok in 1996, having at present, in its enlarged composition, 45 partners (since 2006), the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) represents around 50% of the world-GDP, nearly 58% of the world's population and 60% of world trade. ASEM deals with a broad range of topical global issues, including energy and climate change, counter terrorism, non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, world trade, the future of the United Nations, investments, science and technology, culture, inter-religious dialogue and human resource development, etc. ASEM is described by the heads of diplomacy from the two continents as a unique, practical, flexible and comprehensive platform for the Asia-Europe partnership in view of finding joint responses to global challenges. However, the "ASEM-Closer Economic Partnership", endorsed by the ASEM 5 Summit in Hanoi in October 2004, is far from being implemented. Therefore, the European Union (EU)- Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Plan of Action adopted in 2007 should be used to find appropriate ways and means for intensifying pragmatic measures leading to a new, more dynamic and productive partnership applicable between the 45 ASEM-partners.

China is to host the ASEM 7 Summit in Beijing on October 24 -25, 2008. Leaders from the 43 ASEM member countries as well as high officials from the ASEAN Secretariat and the European Commission are expected to attend the biennial Summit. The Chinese State Council approved the establishment of the Summit preparatory committee. In July 2007, the first session of this new body took place. The session reviewed the general concept behind the ASEM Summit and the preparatory work.

As a host country, China believes that both Europe and Asia are enjoying prime development and their visible complementarity and broad common interests help create favorable conditions for further cooperation, encompassing all main components of the ASEM process, namely political dialogue, security and the economy, education and culture, which are called the three pillars of ASEM.

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