

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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There is hope that with the joint contributions of all participants, the ASEM 7 Summit will help promote and cement new partnerships between the two continents. To reach such a crucial strategic objective all ASEM- partners should continue to engage themselves in a more active and energetic spirit in the multidimensional ASEM process. They should make a more innovative use of the promising framework offered by this original inter-regional forum. While ASEM is not yet institutionalized, it can successfully act as a diplomatic catalyst for significant intercontinental dialogue, for developing a deep and more diversified cooperation in a great variety of fields, in harmony with the aspirations of peoples in Asia and in Europe.

1.INTRODUCTION TO AN ORIGINAL FORUM

The establishment of Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) cannot be considered as a political or diplomatic surprise.(1) The names of Asia and Europe are inseparable in the universal history of human civilization. However, for a long period of time the relationships between the two continents represented a comparatively weaker component in the triangular relations between Asia, the USA and Europe. After the end of the Cold War, the world has been moving towards multi-polarity and the economic links between various countries and geographic regions have received an unprecedented density. Yet, traditional and new mechanisms of diplomacy continue to develop and coexist.

In this context, both Asia and Europe are facing the urgent task of maintaining world peace and stability, promoting economic development and social progress through dialogue and cooperation. In such demanding circumstances, Goh Chok Tong, the former Prime Minister of Singapore, advanced, in 1994, with a strong visionary sense, the initiative of convening an Asia-Europe Meeting.(2)

The emergence and promotion of this initiative was made possible by the recognition by both Asia and Europe of the fact that the relationship between them needed to be strengthened in harmony with the new global context of the 1990s, marked not only by the end of the Cold

War, but also by the deepening of European integration and the growing importance of Asia on the world stage. Frank Walter Steinmeier, Germany's Foreign Minister and Vice Chancellor, estimates that Asia's rise as an economic and political player exemplifies what globalization is all about. By the present decade's end, China's economy will be larger than Germany's. By 2040 three of the world's five largest economies - China, India, and Japan - will be in Asia. (3)

In July 1994, the European Commission published a programmatic document titled "Towards a New Asia Strategy", stressing the importance of modernizing the relationship with Asia, and of properly reflecting Asia's growing political, economic and cultural significance. In November 1994, Singapore and France formally proposed that an Asia-Europe Summit meeting be held, to consider how to build a new partnership between the two regions.

The launch of ASEM was officially accomplished through the first ASEM Summit held in Bangkok in March 1996. It marked the beginning of an on-going process including Summit-level meetings every two years, by rotation in Asia and Europe, and an impressive range of specialized meetings and activities at ministerial and working levels.

The first collective consultation about the convening of ASEM was held in Brunei Darussalam in July 1995 and was attended by

seven ASEAN countries (Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, Vietnam) plus China, Japan, the Republic of Korea; and the Troika of the European Union (France, Spain, Italy) plus the European Commission.

The inaugural Asia Europe Meeting was held at summit level in Bangkok on 1-2 March 1996 and was attended by 25 countries from Asia and Europe plus the European Commission. The Asian participating countries were Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, Singapore, Vietnam (seven ASEAN members), China, Japan and the Republic of Korea. The participating countries on the European side were 15 members of the European Union, namely Italy, Germany, France, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxemburg, Denmark, Ireland, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Austria, Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom plus the European Commission.

ASEM 1 was a great diplomatic premiere. The Leaders (heads of state and government) from both Asia and Europe gathered for the first time in history to discuss topical matters of cooperation between the two continents. They explored ways for stronger ties and closer cooperation in political, economic and cultural fields. Adopted after several rounds of consultations, the Chairman's Statement on ASEM 1, released in Bangkok, on March 2, 1996, announced that the Bangkok Meeting forged a new comprehensive Asia-Europe Partnership for Greater Growth. This partnership, valid today, aims at strengthening links between Asia and Europe thereby contributing to peace, global stability and prosperity. The Meeting recognized that the ASEM process needed to be open and evolutionary and agreed that follow-up actions to be undertaken jointly by the participants will be based on consensus. (4)

There is no definition of partnership in the document. According to Encyclopædia Britannica

(2007) partnership is a voluntary association of two or more persons for the purpose of managing a business enterprise and sharing its profits or losses. Unlike the corporation, the partnership is regarded merely as an aggregation of persons doing business under a common name and not as a legal entity separate and apart from its shareholders. (5) ASEM will correct and nuance such a definition by its specific activities.

By the same token, ASEM 1 agreed on a wide range of cooperation fields. They can be summarized as follows: (a). Political dialogue with focus on issues of common interest. (b). Economic cooperation, which should be enhanced by intensifying the Asia-Europe cooperation in the fields of science and technology, agriculture, energy, transportation, human resource development, poverty eradication and environment protection; by promoting mutual trade and investment between the two continents and strengthening dialogue and cooperation on the issue of global trade system. (c). Promoting cooperation in other areas, such as the intellectual, cultural and people -to -people exchange and cooperation.

In accordance with the consensus reached by ASEM 1, the ASEM activities should be conducted in non-institutionalized form at various levels, including the ASEM Summit Meeting, the ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting, the ASEM Senior Officials' Meeting, the Meetings at the Ministerial level and ASEM Follow-up Activities. (6)

As a result of decisions adopted over the years (the most recent was taken by ASEM 6 in Helsinki, in September 2006), at present the 45 ASEM-partners are: Japan, China, India, Mongolia, Pakistan, Republic of Korea, all 10 ASEAN Member States (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei Darussalam, Vietnam, Myanmar, the Lao

People's Democratic Republic and Cambodia), the ASEAN Secretariat as well as the 27 European Union Member States and the European Commission. (7)

Many diplomatic events illustrate the fact that ASEM, as the time-tested direct contact channel between two continents, becomes more and more important and significant. The establishment and development of ASEM has greatly reinforced diplomatic communication between all its participants.

In accordance with the mandate of ASEM leaders, Asia and Europe have conducted a wide range of cooperation activities in a variety of fields which have greatly enriched the meaning of ASEM as a symbolic forum of a functioning new partnership. At the same time, the political dialogue between Asia and Europe has been evolutionary and led to the establishment of a good atmosphere, favorable to further positive developments. ASEM has proved to be instrumental not only in enhancing the economic development of the two continents, in maintaining the regional and world peace and stability, but also in promoting multi-polarization, as well as unity in diversity. The healthy, stable and lasting relationship of 43 countries will offer more visibility to ASEM in the years to come.

At the same time there is also a wide-spread perception that the EU has had for a long period of time only minimal political visibility in Asia, being overshadowed by the USA's much closer and intensive relations with the Asian continent. From this perspective, it is assumed that ASEM's creation was the EU playing catch-up with the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). However, during the first 11 years of cooperation under the ASEM's auspices, it appears that the EU members have tried to increase the political dialogue within this forum, while the Asian participants have preferred to talk trade. Most

recently, there are views according to which Europe is looking to make its Asia policy less Sino-centric by refurbishing relations with India and ASEAN. (8) What is the real situation now? We will try to answer that question mostly on the basis of 2007 available information.

2. A DIPLOMATIC REVIEW

ASEM was defined in some specialized studies as a holistic mechanism for interregional diplomacy. (9) It is not an international organization and its short history demonstrated that its members avoided the perceived obstacles of a highly official style of politics. The most recent diplomatic review of ASEM's activities took place during the Eighth ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting, which was held in Hamburg, Germany, on 28-29 May 2007. The Meeting was chaired by the EU-Presidency, German Federal Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier. For the first time ASEM Foreign Ministers met in an enlarged format with the participation of all 45 ASEM-partners. (10)

Alongside with ASEM Summits, the biennial Foreign Ministers Meetings held by rotation in Europe and Asia are intended to be a forum for informal dialogue and they offer European and Asian heads of diplomacy the chance to meet and discuss significant issues of global concern. In addition to topical questions on the current international agenda, these meetings put also a relatively strong focus on economic, cultural and social issues. This ministerial practice contributed to intensifying exchange of views and cooperation on the category of "new issues" such as energy and climate change, jobs and employment, education and research. In this regard ASEM constantly tries to adapt its potential to a practice-oriented process geared to the challenges of the future.

Hamburg was a diplomatic premiere for ASEM's six new members India, Pakistan, Mongolia, Bulgaria, Romania, all represented by their foreign ministers, as well as for the Secretary-General of ASEAN. The new ASEM-partners completed their internal procedures to officially become ASEM-partners. The celebration of their formal admission will take place at the ASEM 7 Summit on 24-25 October 2008 in China. Therefore, an important aim of the Hamburg meeting was to encourage the new ASEM-partners to actively participate in the ASEM process. It should also be noted that for the first time Dr. Javier Solana, the EU's High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, was a guest at the ASEM Foreign Ministers Meeting. His presence epitomized the forum's growing security-policy dimension.

During the Hamburg meeting it was cogently pointed out that nobody can deal with any major global issue without Asia's involvement. A critical glance at the range of topics discussed in Hamburg shows the extent to which global developments give Asian-European cooperation a paramount importance during the irreversible process of globalization.

There is a broad range of issues of common interest considered by the 45 ASEM-partners. The list of issues includes: energy and climate change, counter terrorism, non-proliferation, world trade and the United Nations; international issues such as Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, the Korean Peninsula, the Middle East; recent developments in Asia and Europe. (11)

In an ominous reading of its documents, it should be noted that there is significant common ground in the positions of ASEM-partners in numerous fields. That makes possible further action and initiatives to continue to make utmost use of the existing ASEM dialogue and cooperation. In this respect ASEM itself has to

constantly prove that it is a unique, practical, flexible and comprehensive platform for the Asia-Europe partnership in view of finding joint responses to global challenges.

The political and diplomatic mandate for the 45 ASEM-partners is a composite one. They are expected to continue to implement ASEM-Summits' and ASEM-Ministers' Statements and Declarations since 1996, while taking into consideration the "Helsinki Declaration on the Future of ASEM" and "ASEM Working Methods and Institutional Mechanisms", endorsed by the ASEM 6 Summit in Helsinki on 10-11 September 2006.

More specifically, there seems to be agreement to deploy more efforts to enhance and deepen the Asia Europe Partnership in the ASEM framework in order to tackle together international and global challenges, as spelled out in the just mentioned Helsinki documents. From this perspective there is a highly visible "need to adapt the Asia Europe Cooperation Framework (AECF) of 2000 to the requirements of ASEM's second decade and the new developments of the process". The various findings of this adaptation exercise will be submitted for consideration and action to ASEM7 Summit in China, in October 2008.

On the Asian continent ASEM is committed to assist Afghanistan to bring peace, stability, security and prosperity to the country and its people within the framework of the Afghanistan Compact. ASEM welcomed the decision of the EU to deploy a European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) Mission in the field of policing with linkages to the wider rule of law (EUPOL Afghanistan) as an important contribution to strengthening Afghan National Police Forces.

ASEM urged Iran to comply with the requirements of the UN Security Council

Resolution 1747 and to restore international confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear program. It underscored the need for more active and transparent cooperation with the IAEA in order to resolve the outstanding verification issue. At the same time ASEM recalled the urgent need for a diplomatic solution and a comprehensive arrangement with Iran, through dialogue, while respecting Iran's right to peaceful nuclear energy under safeguards and in accordance with its obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Without entering into details about a very complex issue, it should be recalled that ASEM expressed support for the Iraqi government and its efforts to ensure unity, security, stability and prosperity in the country.

ASEM reaffirmed that the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula remains an international priority and it is essential for maintaining long term peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia. It called upon all parties concerned to work towards the swift denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and implementation of the 19 September 2005 Joint Statement of the Six-Party-Talks.

ASEM-partners reaffirmed their support for a negotiated settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on existing agreements, including the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the principles as laid down in the Road Map. In this connection, they voiced support for the efforts of the Middle East Quartet made up of the UN, the EU, the USA and the Russian Federation in promoting a result oriented dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian leaders in the framework of a renewed political process, aiming at meaningful negotiations on the final status.

A very important element of this original forum's position is the ASEM-partners' support

for a fair, just, rule-based international system with the UN at its heart. It should be recalled that this position is not new, as ASEM adopted the Declaration on Multilateralism of Kildare, on April 18, 2004 and is interested to continue to follow-up on the implementation of this document and to cooperate in order to promote UN reform, including its principal organs, with a view to enhancing their representativeness, transparency and effectiveness. (12)

There is support for a closer ASEM cooperation on climate change and sustainable energy, including cooperation on technologies that promote sustainable use of energy, the development and utilization of renewable and alternative energy, and measures to deal with the loss of biodiversity and deforestation.

While recognizing that ASEM stressed the need for a global and comprehensive post-2012 climate regime to tackle climate change, in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, it remains to be seen what will be its real contribution to this, in particular in the light of the outcome of the Bali UN International Climate Conference in December 2007.

ASEM-partners share a strong determination to join efforts in the fight against terrorism, and in their view there can be no justification for any act of terrorism. At practical level, they supported the implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, adopted by the UN General Assembly by consensus on 8 September 2006 and the UN's relevant conventions and resolutions. ASEM will sponsor a new Counter Terrorism Conference in Madrid in 2008. ASEM-partners will enhance their cooperation in this sensitive and topical field by exchanging knowledge, experience and strategies on countering terrorism. They welcomed some new meaningful developments, such as: the signing of

the ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism; the work carried out by the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation (JCLEC), the South East Asian Regional Centre for Counter Terrorism (SEARCCT) in Kuala Lumpur and the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Bangkok.

In this context, it is necessary to mention the 5th ASEM Conference on Counter-Terrorism (15-16 May 2007, Tokyo, Japan) which was a follow-up of previous ASEM Conferences on Counter-Terrorism held in Beijing (2003), Berlin (2004), Semarang (2005) and Copenhagen (2006), aiming at strengthening this specific cooperation among ASEM-partners by sharing experiences and information and exploring ways and means to enhance counter-terrorism measures.

ASEM-partners supported the strengthening of economic cooperation between the EU and Asia, building on the platform of the WTO, while reaffirming that the Doha Development Agenda remains the priority. They reiterated the commitments to promote sustainable development and to strengthen the social dimension of globalization. They welcomed the launch of EU-ASEAN FTA negotiations on May 4, 2007. Both sides are interested to enhance economic relations by expeditiously negotiating the ASEAN-EU FTA based on a region-to-region approach, mindful of the different levels of development and capacity of individual ASEAN countries, providing for comprehensive trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, as reminded in a joint declaration on November 22, 2007. (13)

In this respect an update is necessary. According to recent estimations released on December 1, 2007 by Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, the new Secretary-General of ASEAN, the ongoing FTA negotiations between ASEAN and the European Union could take longer than

anticipated, but both sides need to have patience as the deal will eventually benefit nearly one billion people. "In my view we would be lucky to have it done even in four years, but then this is not a reason to hold back the talks as negotiations between the two blocs would lead to more opportunities for both sides", said Dr. Surin Pitsuwan. (14)

In this context, it should be recalled that an important document titled the "ASEM-Closer Economic Partnership", endorsed by the ASEM 5 Summit in Hanoi in October 2004 emphasized the necessity of deepening economic cooperation between Asia and Europe through action-oriented programs and policy dialogue. This document is far from being fully implemented. This is just the beginning. Indonesia will host the next ASEM Economic Ministers' Meeting in 2008. There is hope that the ASEM-economic dialogue and cooperation can become a showcase for concrete ASEM achievements among which trade should have a good visibility. (15)

In the sector of transport systems there is a need for fostering the ASEM closer economic partnership. In this respect, there is an initiative from Lithuania to organize the first ASEM Ministerial Meeting on Cooperation on Transport in Vilnius in 2009.

ASEM cooperation in the field of science and technology was illustrated by the 1st Information and Communication Technology, ICT- Meeting in Vietnam in 2006. This meeting encouraged and welcomed follow-up activities such as the ICT-Senior Officials Meeting in 2007/2008 hosted in Europe.

A significant event noticed by ASEM was the celebration of the 30-years of cooperation between the EU and ASEAN. In this regard, ASEM welcomed the "Nuremberg Declaration on an Enhanced EU-ASEAN Partnership"

endorsed during the 16th EU-ASEAN Ministers' Meeting in Nuremberg, Germany on March 14-15, 2007. Indeed, this meeting marked a major step in deepening the unique partnership between the two regional organizations in the next decade. Later on an EU-ASEAN Plan of Action was endorsed during an ASEAN-EU Commemorative Summit which was organized to mark the 30th anniversary of their relations, in Singapore on November 22, 2007. The Joint Declaration adopted on that occasion welcomed that document which is officially titled "ASEAN-EU Plan of Action to Implement the Nuremberg Declaration on an EU-ASEAN Enhanced Partnership". (16)

In the same Joint Declaration, there is an express acknowledgement of ASEAN's centrality and of the leading role played by it in all ASEAN-related regional architecture, in particular the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), as the main forum for regional dialogue and political and security cooperation in the Asia Pacific.

The social dimension of ASEM was initiated with the 1st ASEM Ministerial Meeting on Labour and Employment in Potsdam, Germany in September 2006. This gathering highlighted the importance of concerted efforts to strengthen the social dimension of globalization. Indonesia will host the 2nd Ministerial Meeting on Labour and Employment in Bali, in September 2008.

There is agreement to convene the 1st ASEM Ministerial Meeting on Education and Qualification in Germany, co-sponsored by China in 2008 and to support some connected activities such as "life long learning-initiative" by Denmark, thus underlining the pivotal role of education and training for qualified human resources as a key factor for economic and social development in a globalized world. ASEM- partners accepted Vietnam's offer to host the 2nd ASEM Ministerial Meeting on Education in Hanoi in 2009.

In the cultural field, ASEM-partners appealed to all interested states to ratify and implement the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. They welcomed Malaysia's offer to host the third ASEM Culture Ministers' Meeting in 2008 and the previous work done by other ASEM-partners, in particular China and France, for hosting the first two ASEM Cultural Ministers' Meetings in 2003 and 2005. There is also Poland's offer to host the fourth and Vietnam's offer to host the fifth ASEM Culture Ministers' Meetings.

Mention should be made of the Employment Workshops Related to the Restoration of Cultural Heritage and the Environment (14-15 June 2007, Madrid, Spain). This initiative was the first ASEM conference aimed at promoting the entry into the workforce of disadvantaged young people and adults, by training them on handicrafts, trades and skills traditional in each region. A Vietnamese initiative for an ASEM Tourism Forum in Hanoi in 2008 is well related to the same field.

Similarly, the ASEM Interfaith Dialogue is meant to contribute to the better understanding of and respect for world religions. It may have a crucial role in providing a solid platform where governments, civil society, including religious organizations, can come together to advocate interfaith dialogue as a viable tool for peace. Two Interfaith Dialogues took already place in Indonesia in 2005 and in Cyprus in 2006. Both meetings stressed the importance of translating the shared values of peace, compassion, and tolerance reflected in the "Bali Declaration" into practical actions, in particular in four recommended fields: education, culture, media, religion, society. (17)

The 3rd ASEM Interfaith Dialogue was organized in China in June 2007 and will be analyzed below. Continuing the Interfaith Dialogue will be one of the priorities during the Slovenian

EU-Presidency in 2008.

ASEM-partners expressed support for multilateral efforts such as the UN sponsored "Alliance of Civilizations" to enhance dialogue and cooperation among cultures and civilizations. (18)

A very instructive document for a clear understanding of the complex de facto political and diplomatic mandate of ASEM is the Nanjing Statement on Interfaith Dialogue. It was adopted by a multidisciplinary meeting which took place in Nanjing, China on 19-22 June 2007. It was co-hosted by China and Italy and co-sponsored by Austria, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Netherlands, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, Spain, Thailand and UK. The participants reached agreement on some understanding and actions to be taken for furthering the ASEM Interfaith Dialogue.

ASEM-partners recognized the valuable contribution of mutually inclusive, reinforcing and interrelated initiatives and their results at the national, regional and international levels to promote inter-civilization, intercultural and interfaith dialogue.

In ASEM-partners view, globalization in all its aspects and advancement of science and technology has resulted in greater interaction among peoples and faiths, bringing about both opportunities and challenges in a more interlinked and interdependent world. They recognized that respect for religious and cultural diversity in an increasingly globalizing world enriches national identity, contributes to regional and international cooperation, promotes enhanced dialogue among civilizations and helps create an environment conducive to the exchange of human experience and to the promotion of human rights and human dignity.

ASEM-partners noted that threats such as poverty and under-development, the widening gap between the rich and the poor, transnational organized crime, natural disasters, terrorism, infectious diseases and environment degradation, also challenge the global community today and threaten our common survival. They emphasized that such global challenges can be met with the positive support of religions and interfaith dialogue.

An interesting idea expressed by ASEM-partners is that the plurality and diversity of languages, cultures, philosophies, faiths and religions are part of the great heritage and historical identity of ASEM countries. Therefore, they called on ASEM-partners to respect freedom of religion or belief, diversity in social system, paths of development and culture and oppose all forms of intolerance, exclusion, xenophobia or racism so that cultural, ethnic, social and religious diversities shall not lead to conflict but rather to peaceful coexistence. This specific terminology should not be underestimated.

Noting that globalization also poses challenge to preserving and protecting faiths and cultural heritage and traditions, ASEM-partners emphasized the need to enrich globalization with commonly shared values. They renewed their commitment to peace, calling for the peaceful and harmonious coexistence of faiths and cultures and respect for human rights and dignity.

ASEM-partners reaffirmed their commitment to oppose extremism, to contribute to the peaceful settlement of conflicts and to prevent and combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. They also reiterated their determination to prevent and reject stereotyping of national religious or ethnic groups in association with terrorism. They condemned the use of violence in the name of religions, faiths or ideologies not only within their communities but also in the world at large. They also condemned the instrumental use of symbols

and religious, cultural or ethnical values to generating conflicts, to feeding wars or to justifying terrorism.

A very advanced idea is the express recognition that all cultures and religions share a common set of universal values and can all play a unique and positive role in promoting world peace and human progress. ASEM-partners emphasized the need, at all levels of society and among religious communities in Asia and Europe, to double efforts in searching for and teaching common ethics that are conducive to the peaceful coexistence of different cultural and religious groups.

The participants in the Nanjing Interfaith Dialogue reaffirmed the importance of eradicating poverty and promoting sustained economic growth, sustainable development and common prosperity bearing in mind the spirit of economic solidarity, and reiterated the determination to ensure the timely and full realization of the UN Millennium Development Goals. They underlined the valuable role faiths can play in achieving these goals, for instance, by pointing to the moral dimension of the debt burden of developing countries and insisting on a just solution to alleviating this burden. They also emphasized the need to give value to the engagement of faiths in the global effort to protect the environment and respect Nature.

The participants in the Nanjing Interfaith Dialogue called on ASEM-partners to engage in more cultural exchanges and educational cooperation to provide the people, especially the youth, with opportunities to acquire knowledge of and respect for different civilizations, cultures and religions, so as to enhance their understanding of common ethical values. They encouraged partners to advance research in faiths and cultures from a comprehensive and multidisciplinary perspective, as well as carry out academic exchanges.

The participants in the Nanjing Interfaith Dialogue welcomed the offer of the Netherlands to host, together with Thailand, the Fourth ASEM Interfaith Dialogue in the first week of June 2008 in Amsterdam and looked forward to building on the good momentum of the ASEM Interfaith Dialogue.

From recent and future ASEM meetings, appropriate note should be taken of some specialized gatherings. (19)

The 2nd Conference for Young Political Leaders (29-30 October 2007, Guilin City, China) offered a concrete recognition on the role of youth as key actors in revitalizing and substantiating the Asia-Europe partnership. Earlier, the Asia-Europe Young Parliamentarians' Meeting took place from 26 February to 2 March 2007 in The Hague, Netherlands. This meeting co-organized by the Asia-Europe Foundation, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the International Institute for Asian Studies, was hosted by the Netherlands House of Representatives.

The ASEM Customs Director-General Commissioner Meeting (12-13 November 2007, Yokohama, Japan) brought delegations from 45 ASEM-partners to discuss common issues facing customs administrations of Asia and Europe. The ASEM Workshop on Avian Influenza Control (12-14 November 2007, Beijing, China) aimed to promote Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) prevention and control through exchanging experience on policy, regulations and technical measures, and exploring cooperation mechanisms for ASEM countries.

In its turn, the ASEM Youth Dialogue (12 - 17 November 2007, Mindoro, the Philippines) provided a valuable challenge through which youth can exchange perspectives on priority themes in the ASEM agenda.

The 6th ASEM Immigration Directors' Meeting (19-26 November 2007, Seoul, Korea) was attended by about 200 participants, including government representatives from ASEM countries, from international organizations, as well as academic experts.

The 2nd ASEM Information & Communication Technologies (ICT) Senior Officials' Meeting (4-5 December 2007, Brussels, Belgium) was convened in light of the decision of the ASEM Leaders who, during the 5th ASEM Summit, had approved the ASEM ICT Initiative on promoting the applications of ICT in human resources development and capacity building.

A future ASEM Visibility and Communication Strategy Workshop (13-14 December 2007, Brussels, Belgium) is a follow-up to the Helsinki Summit, which highlighted the need to improve visibility and establish a better communication strategy for ASEM.

This is by all means a very topical meeting, reflecting a major concern. Does ASEM have a real identity for academic text-books? It is a question involving the credibility of multilateral diplomacy with students of international relations. People interested in Asian-European relations cannot overlook, for instance, the fact that in a book of over 1250 pages *International Institutional Law: Unity Within Diversity* by Henry G. Schermers and Niels M. Blokker (2003) ASEM is not even mentioned. The same observation is valid also in case of Bowett: *Law of International Institutions* 5th revised edition (2001) by Philippe Sands and Pierre Klein, as well as for the monumental book *Organisations Internationales* (2002), both in French and Spanish, published in several editions by Manuel Diez de Velasco Vallejo.

The last relevant ASEM meeting in 2007 is the Senior Officials' Meeting on Trade and

Investment (SOMTI) to be held on 17 December 2007 in Lisbon, Portugal. This meeting is expected to assist with the work of ASEM Economic Ministers.

In 2008, the first meeting will be the ASEM Senior Officials' Meeting in Slovenia (exact venue and date to be confirmed) which is part of regular meetings for coordination work on ASEM activities.

The 9th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting (25-26 May 2009, Hanoi, Vietnam), in addition to pursuing the traditional ASEM dialogue under the first and third pillars (political dialogue, cooperation in other areas), is also responsible for the overall co-ordination of the ASEM process. It will be also a test of tactical flexibility and adaptability of the forum, as it will be the first meeting of heads of diplomacy of 45 ASEM-partners after the Beijing Summit in 2008.

3. HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR A PROMISING ASEM7

There is general agreement that the most important ASEM meetings are its summits. China briefed the ASEM Ministerial Meeting in Hamburg in May 2007 on its preparation of the ASEM 7 Summit to be held in Beijing on 24-25 October 2008. The Meeting expressed appreciation and support for China's efforts in the run up to ASEM 7. (20)

The Beijing Summit will be the culmination of many related events. ASEM-partners took note of the numerous ongoing ASEM-initiatives and cooperation reflecting the broad and dynamic Asia-Europe partnership and cooperation. They welcomed the European Commission's intention to establish a facility to work with partners in advancing the dialogue in priority policy areas recognized by Leaders at ASEM 6 in Helsinki,

such as economy and finance, environment, employment and social affairs, as well as promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural affairs. They also took note of the findings of the ASEM visibility study financed by the European Commission to be considered also in a special meeting in December 2007, as mentioned above. They encouraged all ASEM-partners to continue to engage actively in the ASEM process, making utmost use of the ASEM-framework as an operational, broad platform and catalyst for dialogue and cooperation, for the benefit of the peoples in Asia and in Europe.

In anticipation of the ASEM 7 Summit, a two-day ASEM Senior Officials' Meeting was held in October 2007 in Guilin in South China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. (21) It focused on preparatory work and progress of the biennial summit, as well as on topical international and regional issues. China has established a summit preparatory committee headed by Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi. In his statement at the Eighth ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting Yang Jiechi defined ASEM as the most important platform of dialogue and exchanges between Asia and Europe. In his view ASEM enjoys a growing international prestige, and it has created broader prospects for Asia-Europe cooperation. But there are many challenges, such as the need to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of ASEM dialogue. ASEM-partners should be visionary and innovative and endeavor to raise Asia-Europe cooperation to a higher level in the next decade. He reminded that at the Helsinki Summit in 2006 the leaders took stock of the progress of ASEM in the past decade, identified priorities in Asia-Europe dialogue and cooperation in the coming years, approved a number of initiatives and adopted the recommendation on improving the working methods. It is necessary to take steps to implement the decisions made at the Helsinki Summit. ASEM should make full use of the opportunity offered by its enlargement and the

wider range of cooperation, make its meetings at various levels and in various areas more effective and strengthen coordination and management of its follow-up actions. (22) China, as a host to the ASEM 7 Summit, looks forward to working closely with ASEM-partners to advance the ASEM process. There are good reasons to suppose that China will succeed in making ASEM 7 Summit a historic event.

ASEM has already demonstrated its vitality. Asia and Europe have achieved much by working together over the last 11 years. Its track record may not be too impressive, but it may positively stimulate the political imagination and will of the leaders of 45 partners.

ASEM 7 Summit in Beijing in 2008 is expected to be a real diplomatic landmark for this original forum. The large interest for this Summit and the outcomes of previous ASEM events are in harmony with the aspiration for "an ASEM spirit", invoked in 2002 at Copenhagen, dedicated to developing cooperation and solidarity as genuine elements of globalization. (24) The crystallization of such spirit would strongly consolidate ASEM's unique position on the diplomatic arena.

As emphasized by Ban Ki-moon, in his previous capacity as Foreign Minister of the Republic of Korea, through dialogue and cooperation, the ASEM process has greatly advanced the convergence of various interests of the two regions. It has also provided a role model of inter-regional cooperation in tackling multiple and complex challenges that confront the global community. (25) The ASEM 7 Summit in Beijing is expected to successfully map out in 2008 new directions for the ASEM process to deal in a more efficient way with new challenges during its second decade of existence. (26)

Much more positive work can be anticipated in ASEM after the entry into force of the ASEAN Charter, signed in Singapore on November 20, 2007 by all 10 members of this regional organization. (27) A whole chapter (Chapter XII) is dedicated to ASEAN's external relations. Article 41 specifically stipulates that ASEAN shall develop friendly relations and mutually beneficial dialogue, cooperation and partnerships with countries and sub-regional, regional and international organizations and institutions. It is naturally emphasized that the external relations of ASEAN shall adhere to the purposes and principles set forth in its Charter. For the future development of ASEM it is cogent to remind that the same article 41 has a direct relevance for the dialogue and cooperation between Asian and European partners. It says in paragraph 3: "ASEAN shall be the primary driving force in regional arrangements that it initiates and maintain its centrality in regional cooperation and community building." Article 41 answers also the important question about the manner in which such dialogue and cooperation will be envisaged in practice. Paragraph 4 of article 41 is quite clear in this regard. "In the conduct of external relations of ASEAN, Member States shall, on the basis of unity and solidarity, coordinate and endeavour to develop common positions and pursue joint actions."

A significant provision is contained in paragraph 5 of article 41 dealing with ASEAN's strategy. It stipulates: "The strategic policy directions of ASEAN's external relations shall be set by the ASEAN Summit upon the recommendation of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting." This Meeting has an important role. It "shall ensure consistency and coherence in the conduct of ASEAN's external relations" (par.6)

Having full legal personality, in conformity with paragraph 7 of article 41, "ASEAN may conclude

agreements with countries or sub-regional, regional and international organizations and institutions. The procedures for concluding such agreements shall be prescribed by the ASEAN Coordinating Council in consultation with the ASEAN Community Councils."

From the practical point of view the provisions of article 42 on dialogue coordinator may have a positive impact on ASEM's functioning. Indeed, in conformity with paragraph 1 of this article, ASEAN's Member States, "acting as Country Coordinators, shall take turns to take overall responsibility in coordinating and promoting the interests of ASEAN in its relations with the relevant Dialogue Partners, regional and international organizations and institutions." That concerns in a direct way relations between ASEAN and the EU both bilaterally and in the framework of ASEM.

Paragraph 2 of article 42 contains specific provisions about the duties of Country Coordinators. It says: "In relations with the external partners, the Country Coordinators shall, inter alia:

- (a) represent ASEAN and enhance relations on the basis of mutual respect and equality, in conformity with ASEAN's principles;

- (b) co-chair relevant meetings between ASEAN and external partners; and

- (c) be supported by the relevant ASEAN Committees in Third Countries and International Organizations."

An interesting component of ASEAN's diplomatic activities with direct relevance for ASEM is stipulated in article 43 of the Charter of ASEAN. It deals with ASEAN Committees in third countries and international organizations. In paragraph 1 of this article it is stated for the first

time in a legal instrument in ASEAN's history that "ASEAN Committees in Third Countries may be established in non-ASEAN countries comprising heads of diplomatic missions of ASEAN Member States. Similar Committees may be established relating to international organizations. Such Committees shall promote ASEAN's interests and identity in the host countries and international organizations". This provision can open the door for meaningful diplomatic activities in non-ASEAN countries who are partners in ASEM. Article 43 adds also in its paragraph 2 a necessary precision: "The ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting shall determine the rules of procedure of such Committees."

In the future, original developments for ASEM may occur as a result of the process of implementing article 44 of the Charter of ASEAN dedicated to the status of external parties. In accordance with this article "In conducting ASEAN's external relations, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting may confer on an external party the formal status of Dialogue Partner, Sectoral Dialogue Partner, Development Partner, Special Observer, Guest, or other status that may be established henceforth." (par. 1) However, different situations are also envisaged. Flexibility is inspiring. Consequently, paragraph 2 of the same article says that "External parties may be invited to ASEAN meetings or cooperative activities without being conferred any formal status, in accordance with the rules of procedure."

Article 46 of the ASEAN Charter might also have an impact on diplomatic relations among all ASEM-partners. It clearly mentions such a possibility. It contains a kind of short permissive clause which, if adequately implemented, might bring additional intensity in the diplomatic area of cooperation covered by ASEM. It refers to the foreseeable fact that "Non-ASEAN Member States and relevant inter-governmental organizations may appoint and accredit

Ambassadors to ASEAN. The ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting shall decide on such accreditation."

In this regard, the EU diplomatic practice might offer some useful inspiration. The establishment over the years of official relations between EU with ASEAN, the African Union, the Organization of American States, and with many countries, including the USA, China, India, Japan, Russia and Australia, illustrates the universal significance and impact of decisions taken in the field of diplomatic representation. It is appropriate to recall in this context that the European Commission is represented by permanent delegations in 130 countries in all continents (excepting Antarctica), as well as at five international organizations, making it the fourth largest diplomatic service in the world, and epitomizing a remarkable new reality in a world of traditional state-centric diplomacy. (28)

The EU works with all United Nations (UN) agencies across virtually the entire spectrum of UN activities, from development policy and peace-building, to humanitarian assistance, environment, human right, culture and fighting terrorism. This agenda is in fact valid also for ASEAN and that creates favorable conditions for common ASEAN-EU initiatives both in ASEM and by its intermediary at the UN itself. The commitment for joint actions in the world organization was formulated in 1996 at the first ASEM Summit in Bangkok. In the Chairman's Statement of ASEM 1 released in Bangkok on March 2, 1996 there is a paragraph in which it is emphasized that the Meeting agreed to cooperate in promoting the effective reform and greater democratization of the UN system, including inter alia the issues concerning the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and UN finances, with a view to reinforcing its preeminent role in maintaining and promoting international peace and security and

sustainable development. In this connection, the Meeting agreed to the initiation of a dialogue between representatives of participating nations of the ASEM in New York to consider the vital question of the UN reform. (29) The implementation of this commitment remains on the waiting list. ASEM 7 in Beijing in October 2008 might refresh and stimulate the political will of all ASEM participants to give gradual tangibility to a commitment assumed 11 years ago.

4. HAS ASEM's TIME COME?

The above question could be reformulated as: Can ASEM become an effective instrument of multilateralism? Scholars operating from a realist paradigm would be inclined to focus on this question for good pragmatic reasons. Indeed, practice shows that ASEM has opened the door for some Asian partners to discover the virtues and maybe also the limitations of multilateral diplomacy. The multifaceted nature of ASEM and its 11-year history make difficult all attempts of theoretical conceptualization. In an academic article Sung-Hoon Park from the Graduate School of International Studies, Korea University, asserts that the ASEM process was a by-product of increasing tensions between multilateralism and regionalism. The Asian members of ASEM shared different strategic approaches as a result of their diverse geopolitical positions. However, the Asians, especially since the financial crisis of 1997, are well aware of the utility and necessity of their own regionalism. The ASEM process may, therefore, find itself in the future in increasing tension with a stronger regionalist tendency in East Asia. The general conclusion is that both Europeans and Asians are facing an immediate task of revitalizing the dynamics of ASEM cooperation. (30)

From a similar perspective, in another academic article Christopher M. Dent from

University of Hull, United Kingdom, examines the global and tripolar contexts in which ASEM emerged, and its position in the new post-Cold War architecture of international relations. Regarding the main purposes, structures, processes and achievements of ASEM inter-regional diplomacy, it is argued that ASEM can be broadly judged by the extent it has fostered micro-networking and macro-networking linkages between both regions. Micro-networking primarily relates to ASEM's various socialization processes and functions on which wider macro-networking ties between the peoples of Europe and East Asia can be further built. However, the author believes that Eurasian links are still relatively under-developed in comparison to their transpacific and transatlantic counterparts. (31)

In a more general article by Xavier Batalla published on September 16, 2007, it is emphasized that the ASEM Summit in Helsinki in 2006 was the stage of a multilateral exercise. It underscored the virtue of multilateralism but, at the same time, indicated the obstacles it must overcome as an alternative to unilateralism. (32)

ASEM was created in 1996 with the aim that Europeans and Asians cooperate in favor of multilateralism. Unilateralist doctrine affirms that, in a chaotic international stage, states must conduct their foreign policy individually. Multilateralism, on the contrary, states that only if states act concurrently can chaos be prevented. The doctrine of multilateralism is based on the obligations universally proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, but cooperation is much easier to reach in economics than in foreign policy, asserts Xavier Batalla.

Has ASEM's time come? The EU hoped that talking with Asian countries as a group would strengthen global governance, but critics say this tactic has not worked. A report commissioned by the Japanese and Finnish foreign ministries,

which formed a basis for discussion during ASEM 6 in Helsinki, concluded candidly that the ASEM dialogue "while broad has not been deep" and that ASEM "has not entirely lived up to the initial expectations". (33)

As for enhancing the EU's position in the EU-US- Asia triumvirate, the report estimated that "ASEM has not been able to enhance the balance of power in the triangle remarkably". This is hardly an endorsement of achievements. The report warned that ASEM may have to make some tough decisions in order to make sure participants do not succumb to "forum fatigue" and lose interest in ASEM altogether. ASEM-partners now need to focus on concrete results.

According to Sebastian Bersick, who was involved in the elaboration of the above report and is a senior researcher at the European Institute for Asian Studies, the informality of ASEM meetings may make achieving concrete results difficult, but it does produce other benefits. Without the principle of informality there would be no ASEM process at all," he said. According to Bersick it is this informality that helped the EU coax China into ASEM and towards developing closer ties with its neighbors. The creation, in 2005, of an annual East Asian Summit is seen as evidence of this burgeoning process of regional integration.

Bersick and other ASEM supporters argue that while the problems between China and Japan, or between the EU and Asia, may not have dissolved because of ASEM, the forum is a step towards their solution. The challenge now for the EU is to harness that regional integration and to act for more transparency in the way ASEM does business. (34)

Does ASEM have any impact on the actual system of international relations? Is ASEM a mere addendum? This is a question asked in exactly

these terms in an editorial published by Japan Times, on September 16, 2006. The starting point of this significant article is positive. ASEM has the potential to be an important international forum. Its members have respect and preference for multilateralism. It makes them natural allies in the struggle to shore up international law and international institutions. (35)

ASEM should be more than its summits and its fate should be more seriously considered. However, policymakers and academics disagree about how useful ASEM has been. And even some members of ASEAN view it as an ineffective talking-machine. For Han Sung-Joo (1997), ASEM resembles "having a house before having furniture". From an American internationalist point of view, the chances are even less that Europe will provide furniture which clashes with American taste. Asia is a locomotive of globalization. Yet, Asia is not driving globalization alone. Europe is also part of this development, but it has to shape globalization together with Asia. (36)

In this regard, we will refer to an academic contribution to the matter under consideration signed by ambassador Michael Reiterer, considered to be one of the EU's best experts on Asia. Between 1998-2002 he was counsellor for ASEM in the EC headquarters in Brussels, responsible for the management, development and coordination of the political, economic and cultural pillars of ASEM with EU Member States and ten Asian-partners. His contribution titled *The European Union and East Asia: A New Start?* offers a description of significant trends which illustrate the growing and politically important economic interdependence between the EU and East Asia, which increasingly influences politics in general and security policy in particular.

The Swiss author correctly observes that ASEM fits well with the EU's interregional

approach to international relations. The upgrading of the ASEAN Secretariat and its formal admission to the ASEM process was inspired by the European Commission's role from the beginning of the process.

ASEM, defined as another summit driven process, has taken up many pressing issues. The list given by the author is significant. It cogently reminds that the need for inter-cultural and interfaith communication analyzed above was put on the ASEM agenda before it became fashionable. The same applies to fostering IT cooperation and educational exchanges as well as environmental cooperation. Managing the dialogue process of now 45 partners in a non-institutionalized manner, communicating to a public what the concept "dialogue process" stands for and what it achieves are some of the major challenges ASEM has to master in order to maintain its niche. (37)

As indicated above, over the last few years, ASEM has almost doubled its membership from 26 to 45 and at the same time deepened cooperation on "new topics" such as energy and climate change, labour and employment, as well as education and research. This is by all means a positive development which demonstrates that ASEM is a dynamic process adaptable to the future. Within this working format, ASEM diplomacy, if clearly articulated around fundamental objectives, would be capable to react flexibly and pragmatically to the current global problems.

There are strong views in Europe that foreign policy is increasingly becoming an effective instrument of global governance. From this perspective, ASEM is, indeed, a meaningful forum where two continents can act jointly in shaping the rules of the international system. Responsible action on the part of Europe and Asia is a key factor which cannot be underestimated. Europe

wants to win Asia as a partner for a policy geared to peace, justice and sustainable economic activity. In this way, Europe and Asia, as mutual winners, will be able to secure their future together.

The ASEM subject spectrum has significantly shifted over the last decade. The topics of its meetings now range from current foreign policy and security issues such as the situation in the Middle East and Afghanistan, Iran and Myanmar, through energy and climate change and socio-political subjects such as work, employment and education, right up to intercultural and interfaith dialogue, as well as information and communication technology. The increasingly globalizing world will necessarily have a great impact on economic governance on all continents. At the same time the present international structures and what is conventionally called but insufficiently defined as global governance are not yet adequately ripe to rely on them exclusively. Therefore for the time being the 45 ASEM-partners have to pay much more attention and energy to enhancing the role and visibility of this inter-regional forum in search of a more dynamic and productive partnership. (38)

At political and diplomatic levels ASEM-partners should have a more innovative approach in finding the best ideas and concepts to confront the unprecedented challenges facing them. However, in a realistic reading of its future tasks ASEM can only be as good as the true commitment and will of its partners.

ASEM is just a forum and cannot distance from its members/partners to become a normative mechanism. Yet, ASEM's memory should be revisited.

The writer of this article was present at the inaugural ceremony of ASEM 1 Summit which took place in Bangkok on March 1, 1996. In accordance with the Summary of Outcome of the

first day of the Summit, as revealed by the Thai Foreign Ministry Spokesman, the gist of deliberations was inter alia as follows: Leaders of both Asia and Europe agreed on the importance of lending support to multilateralism while condemning unilateralism as a means to resolve trade issues. They shared the view that the ASEM would benefit not only the two regions but would boost the global economy. They also estimated that the differences of Asia and Europe should not undermine the important areas in which there were commonality and mutual interest. (39) These conclusions are equally topical in 2007 as they were in 1996.

More importantly, despite formidable challenges of a global nature, there is reasonable hope that Asia-Europe dialogue and multilateral cooperation will pass through positive transformations and will continue to develop in the years to come. Countries from both continents are growing and modernizing rapidly, assimilating new ideas emerging from the irreversible process of globalization and they are trying to adapt them to the specificity of their own situations. Together, they are able to influence other economies and societies.

There is a strong expectation on the Asian continent that the tremendous economic, social and political changes sweeping across the region will gradually lead to a true Asian renaissance. This ambitious aspiration can receive tangibility if both European and Asian nations adopt a more innovative approach of their relations, opening up new opportunities for trade and investment, sustaining global growth, expanding cultural exchanges, increasing spiritual dialogue and contributing together to lifting billions of people out of poverty.

It is important to note that in a related context, in the Joint Declaration of the ASEAN-EU Commemorative Summit adopted in Singapore

on November 22, 2007, there is a clear-cut commitment to strengthen socio-cultural cooperation between the two organizations by encouraging greater interaction among peoples, in particular youth, academics, media personnel and civil society, and by cooperating with the ASEAN Foundation in promoting public awareness on ASEAN-EU Dialogue Relations. (40) That will help ASEM to successfully continue its complex mission. It will not be easy, as fundamentally ASEM still reflects various constellations of forces and interests which demand great efforts to reach consensus solutions.

Yet, there is no doubt that in both Asia and Europe, people need to reach out across continents on a more dynamic basis. They have to promote more profoundly mutual understanding and beyond global vulnerabilities and perplexities of the present they have to work collectively to establish a more peaceful and prosperous world and further strengthen peace-oriented values on two continents.

Is it an utopian dream of ASEM's instrumentality?

In a classical book about international institutions, it is asserted that international organizations can be seen to be both stabilizers and stimulators. "They function as stimulators because they have been placed in a position in which they can make visible the profits of cooperation as well as the costs of non-cooperation." (41) ASEM is not an international organization but this cogent consideration is *mutatis mutandis* applicable to its own functioning. If we can hardly imagine a world without strong international organizations anymore, in a similar way we cannot imagine the future of Asian-European relations without a more robust ASEAN.

NOTES

1. The most recent analytical study about ASEM used in this article is Looking Back, Looking Forward : ASEM in its Tenth Year. An evaluation of ASEM in its first decade and an exploration of its future possibilities. Prepared by: Japan Center for International Exchange, University of Helsinki Network for European Studies, March 2006. We have used in the present article some data and estimations from this study available at www.aseminfoboard.org/Documents/Summit/ as well as from the collection of documents from ASEM 6, 10-11 September 2006, Helsinki 10 Years of ASEM: Global Challenges - Joint Responses. All documentation on ASEM 6 is available at www.asem6.fi. We have also consulted and used some information and data published on the site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/> visited on December 1st 2007. For the preparation of ASEM7 Summit see also the press reports by Xinhua available at <http://english.people.com.cn>

2. See the pages dedicated to ASEM available on the site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand at <http://www.mfa.go.th/web/286.php>, visited on December 1, 2007.

3. See Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Towards partnership, Daily Times, Pakistan, November 29, 2007. For a general analysis of German contributions to Asia- Europe cooperation see the document Tasks of German Foreign Policy: South-East Asia, Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands at the beginning of the 21st century, German Federal Foreign Office, Berlin, May 2002.

4. For the documents of ASEM 1, including Towards a Common Vision for Asia and Europe: Bangkok, 2 March 1996, quoted in the text see <http://asem.inter.net.th> visited on November 12, 2007.

5. See Encyclopædia Britannica. Retrieved December 3, 2007, from Encyclopædia Britannica Online: <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9058599>

6. See note 4 above.

7. For the text and additional ideas see the documentation mentioned in note 1 above.

8. For these assertions see The EU reconsiders its relationship. Coming to terms with China in New Europe, Belgium, December 2, 2007.

9. All documentation on ASEM 6 is available at www.asem6.fi visited on November 25, 2007. A short article about ASEM 6 was published in the magazine EU today, No.28, Bangkok, December 2006; pp.8-10. It is entitled Seeking joint responses to global challenges.

10. See the relevant documents at www.aseminfo board.org visited on December 2, 2007.

11. The full text of the Hamburg Meeting Statement is available for easy reference as an appendix to the present issue of the ABAC Journal.

12. See the study about ASEM mentioned in note 1 supra.

13. For the text of the Singapore Statement see note 16 infra.

14. See Umesh Pandey, Patience needed in Asean-EU talks, Bangkok Post, Business section, December 1, 2007.

15. For details see the documentation available at www.aseminfoboard.org

16. The ASEAN-EU Commemorative Summit took place in Singapore on November 22, 2007. The Joint Declaration adopted on that occasion welcomed the document officially titled "ASEAN-EU Plan of Action to Implement the Nuremberg Declaration on an EU-ASEAN Enhanced Partnership". See all documentation at www.aseansec.org/ visited on December 1, 2007.

17. For the text of the statement and details see the documentation available at www.aseminfoboard.org

18. See the documentation on the Alliance of Civilizations at www.un.org.

19. For details see Calendar of ASEM events 2006-2008 as reproduced at www.asem6.fi, as well as the documentation available at www.aseminfoboard.org

20. See the full text of the document as an appendix to the present issue of the ABAC Journal

21. See information and data published on the site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjdt/zyjh/t272762.htm> visited on December 1, 2007.

22. See note 21 *supra*.

23. See the study on ASEM mentioned in note 1 *supra*.

24. See Chairman's Statement. Copenhagen, September 22-24, 2002 (ASEM 4) at www.aseminfoboard.org/content/documents/chairmans_statement_asem_4.pdf visited on December 2, 2007.

25. See Ban Ki-moon, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea, speech at the ASEM@10: Connecting Civil

Societies of Asia and Europe -symposium, 8 September, 2006, Helsinki, available at www.asem6.fi/news_and_documents/en_GB/1160636325051/ visited on December 1, 2007.

26. For the text of the statement see <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/> See also the speech by Wen Jiabao, Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China at the 6th ASEM Summit, Helsinki, 10 September 2006, published under the title Deepen Asia-Europe Cooperation to Jointly Meet Challenges available at the same address. For the preparation of ASEM 7 Summit see also the article dated September 12, 2006, entitled Chinese premier maps out blueprint for next ASEM summit available at http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200609/12/eng20060912_301897.html More general aspects are treated in the article titled China's first step forward in its "harmonious world-oriented" diplomacy by the People's Daily and Yan Xuetong, director general of the Institute of International Studies of Tsinghua University in Beijing, published on December 21, 2006.

27. The Charter of ASEAN was made available to the writer by ASEAN Secretariat.

28. See for details www.eu.org

29. For the documents of ASEM 1, including Towards a Common Vision for Asia and Europe: Bangkok, 2 March 1996, quoted in the text, see <http://asem.inter.net.th> visited on November 12, 2007.

30. See Sung-Hun Park ASEM and the future of Asia-Europe relations: Background, characteristics and challenges, Asia Europe Journal, Issue Volume 2, Number 3 / October, 2004, pp. 341-354.

31. See Christopher M. Dent, From inter-regionalism to trans-regionalism? Future

challenges for ASEM, Asia Europe Journal, Issue Volume 1, Number 2 / May, 2003, pp. 223-235.

32. See Xavier Batalla, Multilateral Exercise in La Vanguardia Internacional, September 16, 2007.

33. See the documents mentioned supra in note 1 which contain the report referred to in the text.

34. See among other studies Dr. Sebastian Bersick, Making Euro-Asian Soft Power in the 21st Century: Concepts, Constraints and Consequences available at <http://www.civdialogue.asef.org/SebastianBersick.htm>

35. See ASEM, a mere addendum? in The Japan Times Online at search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/ed20060916a1.html visited on December 1, 2007.

36. The quotation is from the article The US and ASEM: Why The Hegemon didn't Bark by Davis B. Bobrow, available at www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/csgr/research/workingpapers/1998/wp1798.pdf visited on December 2, 2007.

37. See the collective book Europe at 50: Change the paradigm... Save the dream! Geneva, IUHEI, 2007, p.100.

38. These considerations are inspired by the study of the collection of documents from ASEM 6, 10-11 September 2006, Helsinki 10 Years of ASEM: Global Challenges - Joint Responses mentioned in note 1 supra.

39. For press information on ASEM1 and other data quoted in the present article see <http://asem.inter.net.th> visited on November 12, 2007.

40. See Joint Declaration of the ASEAN-EU Commemorative Summit, Singapore, 22 November 2007 available at www.aseansec.org/ visited on December 1, 2007.

41. See Henry G. Schermers and Niels M. Blokker, International Institutional Law: Unity Within Diversity Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Boston/Leiden, 2003, p.1213.

Bangkok, December 4 2007