

## TOWARDS A DYNAMIC ASEAN -EU PARTNERSHIP

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### Abstract

In 2007 the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) celebrates 40 years of existence and the European Union (EU) marks half a century since its legal inception through the Treaties of Rome.

Bilateral links between the two entities started officially in 1977 and were institutionalized in 1980. The ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting is at the apex of their dialogue process.

From that perspective, there is a consensus to work out necessary practical arrangements to further strengthen and reinvigorate the ASEAN-EU cooperation.

The EU is ASEAN's fourth largest trading partner. Collectively, the current 27 EU members rank first among the sources of direct foreign investment to ASEAN.

In operational terms, the EU must reconsider the importance of ASEAN within its foreign policy. This is the most complex challenge confronting EU-Asia diplomacy.

In this context, ASEAN may prove to be a privileged target of innovations in the EU's diplomatic strategies. The gradual accession by the EU and some of its members to the 1976 ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) would contribute to a more dynamic and persuasive trend in developing cooperation between the two entities.

The EU and ASEAN have urgent multilateral priorities, including the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, United Nations(UN) reform, global security, responding to natural disasters,

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giving a human face to globalization and countering transnational crime, terrorism, illegal immigration and epidemics.

ASEAN and the EU are expected to redesign their economic relationship. A “new trans-regional partnership” is suggested.

The new partnership would be comprehensive in scope and more dynamic in action, while paying balanced attention to both trade and investments. It must be ambitious in addressing integration issues and win-win cooperative measures on the two continents.

The EU heads of state and government adopted on March 25, 2007 the “Berlin Declaration” which re-affirmed European values and outlined an optimistic perspective for the EU. Relations with ASEAN will be re-assessed and further developed on the basis of the Nuremberg Declaration on Enhanced EU-ASEAN Partnership.

The initial contacts and relationships between peoples of Southeast Asia and Europe date back over five centuries. (1) They survived several dramatic cycles of ups and downs and have proved to be mutually beneficial to both Asians and Europeans.

2007 is momentous as a landmark year for the EU and ASEAN: 30 years of official EU-ASEAN relations, 40 years since the establishment of ASEAN and 50 years since the signing of the Rome Treaties establishing the European Economic Community. In the last thirty years, the relations between the two regional groupings have been marked both with achievements and drawbacks.

For ASEAN, the EU has been an inspiring model to promote and consolidate its own regional integration. The strengthening of regional integration in the Southeast Asia has also been a privileged area that found the EU and ASEAN actively working together. (2)

ASEAN and the European Economic Community (EEC) began their relations in informality through the 1972 Special Coordinating Committee of ASEAN (SCCAN), which also made the EEC as ASEAN’s first dialogue partner. Subsequently, the ASEAN-EEC Joint Study Group was formed to explore further modalities of cooperation between the two regional groupings. (3)

Largely open to the future, both entities have been deeply involved in a mutually beneficial learning process, which allowed the partnership between Asia and Europe to keep growing. As cogently highlighted by Philippe Sands and Pierre Klein in a classical book about international institutions, including the regional ones, “The development of international organizations has been, in the main, a response to the evident need arising from international intercourse rather than to the philosophical or ideological appeal of the notion of world or global government”. (4)

The formalization of ASEAN’s relationship with the EEC was finally achieved in 1977, and was institutionalized three years later, in March 1980, during the second ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting (Kuala Lumpur). In the preamble of the EC-ASEAN Cooperation Agreement the signatories inserted a visionary paragraph “Affirming their common commitment to support mutually the efforts of ASEAN and the Community to create and to strengthen regional organizations committed to economic growth, social progress and cultural development and aiming to provide an element of balance in international relations”. (5)

The actual EU - ASEAN cooperation is usually illustrated by examples, such as: in the political field: the ASEAN-EU Project for Regional Integration Support (APRIS); in the

environmental and developmental field: the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity- and the EC-ASEAN Energy Facility Program; in the educational field: the ASEAN-EU University Network Program. (6)

Beyond any examples, both ASEAN and the EU are rich in culture and history. However there is still a lack of familiarity about each other's cultures. Therefore, the two sides decided that with the ASEAN University Network already established, educational cooperation between ASEAN and EU in all sectors, especially European and ASEAN studies, engineering and language training should be more intensively developed and strengthened.

On the occasion of the 30th Anniversary of EU-ASEAN relations, an ASEAN-EU Commemorative Summit will be convened in 2007 in an ASEAN country to deepen and enhance further their partnership (7). Important questions have to be answered in that regard.

Are ASEAN and EU able to provide a successful model of inter-regional diplomacy during the present era of global perplexity and vulnerability?

Official documents proclaim that their relations today are founded on shared historical, cultural, economic, scientific, educational and academic ties, and that the peoples of the two regions are committed to the promotion of peace, stability and development. Can institutional actors lead ASEAN's and EU's members to such a destination?

## **1. THE ACTORS**

The entire community of nations celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the "Treaties of Rome" signed on March 25, 1957 by France, Germany,

Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. These legal instruments led to the creation of an original entity, the aim of which was to accomplish a comprehensive economic integration by a common market. More specifically, the first Rome Treaty, consisting of 240 articles, established the European Economic Community (EEC), and the second treaty created the European Atomic Energy Community, known as Euratom.(8)

The establishment of the EEC as a common market had two main objectives. The first was to radically transform the conditions of trade and manufacturing in the EEC. The second was the functional construction of a political Europe and a meaningful step toward the closer unification of the continent.

In the preamble of the first Rome Treaty, its signatories declared not only their determination "to lay the foundations of an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe," but in the same text they had the vision to clearly assert their intention "to confirm the solidarity which binds Europe and the overseas countries" and "to ensure the development of their prosperity, in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations (UN)."

Institutionally, the Single European Act (1986) was the first major reform of the Treaties of Rome, as it set the objective of achieving the internal market by 1992. The Treaty on European Union, known as the "Maastricht Treaty" (1992) brought together the European Communities and institutionalized cooperation in the fields of foreign policy, defense, police and justice together under one umbrella, to be officially called the European Union. It marked the transition from an economic community to a political union based on shared values.

The Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) increased the powers of the EU, transferring to the

communities some of the areas which were previously subject to intergovernmental cooperation in the fields of justice and home affairs. It introduced measures for bringing the EU closer to its citizens and enabling an enhanced cooperation.

The Treaty of Nice (2000) dealt with the issues related to the EU's enlargement. It simplified the rules for an enhanced cooperation and made the judicial system more effective.

Other treaties should also be mentioned, particularly the Treaty of Accession of the United Kingdom, Denmark and Ireland (1972), which increased the number of member states of the European Community from six to nine.

Similar treaties were signed with Greece (1979); Spain and Portugal (1985); Austria, Finland and Sweden (1994); Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia (2003); Bulgaria and Romania (2005). These treaties increased the number of the EU members to 27 with a total population of nearly 500 million people, speaking 23 official languages.

The EU has more inhabitants than any country, except China and India, and the largest GDP in the world. It wishes to become one of the central pillars of a new world by its "soft power" - the force and influence of values, ideas and example which while quintessentially European, are at the same time universal and recognized as such by 192 UN Member States. It advocates for a multi-polar world.

The road forward is not easy. In 2004, after long multilateral negotiations, the Treaty for a Constitution of Europe (TCE) replaced the previous treaties, with the exception of the Euratom Treaty. The drafting of the TCE, a complex legal instrument of more than 65,000

words, was a very difficult political and diplomatic exercise, but it was an integral part of the strong aspirations for building an organization with a distinct identity, able to speak with one strong voice in the world community. With the envisaged establishment of an EU foreign minister, the EU might become a global diplomatic actor with broad strategic plans.

The TCE was signed on October 29, 2004 and was expected to enter into force on November 1, 2006. It has been ratified by 18 countries, but its rejection in 2005 by France and the Netherlands stopped the process of further ratifications and determined the adoption of a period of "reflection" which is still valid today.

Germany, as current holder of the EU presidency, suggested that a re-negotiated TCE would have to be agreed upon by the end of 2007 or the beginning of 2008, so there would be enough time to ratify it in 2009. Irrespective of the acceptance of such a calendar, a roadmap for further EU institutional reform is a vital necessity in order to adapt it to its new dimensions and the formidable challenges of the irreversible process of globalization.

Even if the TCE's rejection in two countries led to a diplomatic setback, the EU members might learn valuable lessons from ASEAN's diplomacy according to which cooperation and decision-making should move forward at a pace comfortable to all participants, without artificial celerity. An authentic consensus is needed to open the way for relevant decisions on how to further improve the function of the EU.

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 Rome in March 1957. 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.

The EU works with all UN agencies across the entire spectrum of their activities, from development policy and peace-building, to humanitarian assistance, environment, human rights, culture and fighting terrorism. The EU is the largest financial contributor to the UN system and a strong promoter of effective multilateralism. In 2005 alone, the UN-EU cooperation extended to over 80 developing countries, including ASEAN's members.

Beyond any uncertainty about the future of the TCE, the EU members have voluntarily entered into a intense relationship of mutual dependency more profound than in any international organization. Collectively, they are determined to ensure a level of prosperity and stability previously unknown on their continent.

The EU is already a prestigious global trading power and an influential factor in world politics. More significantly, it is a community of shared values promoting all fundamental human rights, defending a way of life and a social model without precedent in history. It develops an active cooperation and solidarity, the rule of law and equal rights and obligations for European citizens.

After fifty years the EU encompasses a gross domestic product of 11 trillion Euros (US\$14.6 trillion). The Euro, as an obvious symbol of economic integration, has been adopted by 13 EU members, and in addition to trade policy, member states are already busy working on common policy in the areas of foreign affairs and

security. As EU's citizens have become able to move about and find employment without border restrictions, they define their identities as Europeans.

The EU has a well-acknowledged reputation for advocating peace, a viable future for our planet, sustainable development, environmental and climate protection.

The 27 EU members have to look ahead to the next 50 years, to reflect both on their main achievements and failures, while mobilizing their efforts around core priorities. Their conclusions are summarized in the Berlin Declaration, to be analyzed in the present article from the perspective of the EU-ASEAN relations. This declaration is equally a celebratory and visionary document addressing top European values and priorities.

The Berlin Declaration of March 25, 2007 brings additional evidence that the impasse over the TCE cannot push the EU off course. It will continue to be an open and dynamic institution. "Unity in diversity" is the permanent motto for the EU. It contains a crucial commitment for the future. It is politically fortified by the assessment that the EU's majority consider that by its spirit the TCE responds to their expectations by showing the way towards a more democratic, more transparent, more efficient and stronger Europe on the world arena. The TCE is not dead. In diplomacy, pessimism is not an option, while moderate optimism is a force multiplier to be re-asserted by a vibrant EU.

As a younger sister, born on August 8 1967 through the Bangkok Declaration, ASEAN is an essential partner for the EU. ASEAN was officially established in 1967 in Bangkok by the five original members, namely, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Brunei Darussalam joined on 8 January 1984, Vietnam on 28 July 1995, Lao PDR and Myanmar on 23



July 1997, and Cambodia on 30 April 1999.

The objectives of ASEAN are: economic growth, social progress and cultural development; regional peace and stability as laid down in the Bangkok ASEAN Declaration; promoting collaboration and mutual assistance to improve living standards of the people. In October 2003 ASEAN Concord II Declaration announced the gradual establishment of a Security Community, of an Economic Community and of a Socio-Cultural Community. In accordance with ASEAN Vision 2020 the collective efforts of ASEAN are meant to lead to “A concert of Southeast Asian nations, outward looking, living in peace, stability and prosperity, bonded together in partnership in a dynamic environment and in a community of caring society.”(9)

With its 10 members, ASEAN is home to nearly 560 million people. However, ASEAN members reveal a very uneven economic development. The EU is ASEAN’s fourth largest trading partner.

The ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meetings (AEMM) – 16 until April 2007- are at the apex of their dialogue process. Javier Solana, the EU high representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, recalled that the strategic interests of the EU and ASEAN are too intertwined for either of them to ignore what is going on in the other’s back yard. He urged an intensification of practical cooperation wherever possible.

On issues related to EU-Asia diplomacy, the EU has a significant margin of diplomatic manoeuvrability.

In this context, ASEAN may prove to be a privileged target of innovations in the EU’s diplomatic strategies. ASEAN has developed through an extraordinary multitude of meetings and summits, followed by numerous non-

enforceable agreements. Everything has been based on the understanding that all members will make their “best effort”. This kind of voluntarism is not catalytic, as some ASEAN members are more committed in promoting stronger ties with the EU, while others have less enthusiasm for this course of action. According to a recent assessment “ASEAN is now at a critical turning point”. (10) It is valid also for its external relations.

The gradual accession by some EU members to the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) would contribute to a more dynamic and persuasive trend in developing cooperation between the two entities. France leads by example, as in January 2007 she has already signed the TAC. (11)

ASEAN is expected in the near future to introduce the permanent diplomatic representative system practiced by the EU, which will facilitate a more energetic use of the catalytic functions of diplomacy. These are: negotiation, information, representation and, as a corollary, cooperation. Having in the near future full legal personality, ASEAN will be the primary driving force in all of the regional, inter-regional cooperative arrangements initiated in its area. (12)

Certainly, introducing European diplomatic procedures will not offer immediate, ready-made solutions for expanding EU-ASEAN cooperation, but in accordance with Article 6 of TAC, ASEAN countries should continue to explore all avenues for close and beneficial cooperation with other states, as well as with international and local organizations outside the region.

What can be expected from a robust implementation of TAC is a more resolute commitment of ASEAN countries to collaborate in all fields for the promotion of regional resilience, based on the principles of self-confidence, self-reliance, mutual respect, cooperation and

solidarity, all of which constitute the fundamentals of a strong and viable community of nations in Southeast Asia.

In this regard, serving a proactive solidarity is the most important heritage the EU can advance at the regional and planetary levels.

As the largest trader in the world, the EU greatly values its commercial relations with Asia as a whole and shares Asian countries' aspirations for prosperity and stability. It actively supports the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) process and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) framework, which attempt to build partnerships based on authentic cooperation, excluding any form of hegemonism.

The EU and ASEAN have urgent multilateral priorities, including the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, UN reform, global security, responding to natural disasters, giving a human face to globalization and countering transnational crime, terrorism, illegal immigration and epidemics.

There is progress in the implementation of the Trans-Regional EU-ASEAN Trade Initiative (TREATI), signed in 2001. This trade action plan mainly reflects the intention of both regional groupings to expand trade and investment ties, as well as providing the necessary framework for dialogue on various trade-related issues, such as market access, trade facilitation, investment, etc. (13)

The commencement of the Joint Feasibility Study on ASEAN-EU Economic Cooperation is also a meaningful activity. In that regard a fundamental question of the day is: what are the prospects for an ASEAN-EU free-trade agreement (FTA) by 2010?

In May 2006, the ASEAN-EU Vision Group stated for good reasons that negotiating an FTA

to be completed in two years is a major political decision. Both the EU and ASEAN will need to consult with their constituencies and political leaders. They should also consider the best architecture and timeframe for future negotiations, taking into account the diversity of economic situations of ASEAN members and the current slight decline in the relative shares of ASEAN and the EU in each other's trade and investment. It is imperative to adjust and adapt EU-ASEAN cooperation to the new environment generated by globalization. ASEAN and the EU should redesign their economic relationship. A "new trans-regional partnership" is suggested which would be comprehensive in scope, while paying balanced attention to both trade and investments. The partnership must be ambitious in addressing integration and win-win cooperative measures.

The two entities have to act promptly in establishing such a partnership. If it is delayed or postponed to a distant future, it may be overshadowed by other regional and bilateral initiatives. It is also recommended that the new partnership should be user-friendly and as simple as possible to understand and implement. (14)

These recommendations have a solid basis. The 15<sup>th</sup> AEMM in 2005 adopted in principle the Regional EU-ASEAN Development Initiative (READI) which was subsequently finalized, thus providing a new impetus for ASEAN-EU cooperation in the years to come. The increasing political and economic integration in the two regions would positively contribute to the overall strengthening of ties between Europe and Southeast Asia. (15)

Diplomatic documents show that there is a clearly expressed determination to further promote and enhance ASEAN-EU dialogue and cooperation based on common interests, principles and values, but in conformity with their specific regional priorities and needs. European

diplomats reiterate that the EU stands ready to share its relevant experience on regional integration and contribute, where possible, towards narrowing the development gaps among ASEAN members. (16)

The sixth Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM 6) held in Helsinki was attended by 13 Asian and 25 European nations, as well as the president of the European Commission. Its major theme was “10 Years of ASEM: Global Challenges Joint Responses.” (17) Since the original ASEM I in Bangkok in 1996, the summits have played a pivotal role in providing guidance for the future of ASEM. (18)

The ASEM tenth anniversary was celebrated in the light of the conviction, expressed by its Finnish hosts, that the Bangkok ASEM Summit of 1996 was the beginning of a new era in Asia-Europe relations. (19)

One of the most significant results of ASEM 6 was the enlargement of this original forum of multilateral diplomacy. It welcomed Bulgaria and Romania on the European side, along with India, Mongolia, Pakistan and the ASEAN Secretariat on the Asian side.

Today, ASEM countries already account for 40 percent of the world’s population, 50 percent of gross domestic product and 60 percent of trade. With the above-mentioned enlargement to 45 participants, by 2008 almost 60 per cent of the world’s population will be involved in the ASEM sphere. (20) That will have also a direct impact on the EU – ASEAN relationships.

## **2. THE ISSUES**

In order to understand the issues of the past, present and future in ASEAN – EU relationship it is useful to make a journey in the recent past,

going 10 years back to a significant document titled Joint Declaration adopted at the twelfth ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting in Singapore, on February 13-14, 1997. It contains an instructive list of common issues, still valid and topical, coming from the policy-formulating and coordinating organ of the ASEAN-EU Dialogue relations. (21)

The Foreign Ministers of ASEAN and the EU had a productive and wide-ranging exchange of views in Singapore in 1997 on a number of political, security, economic and other issues. They noted significant progress and accomplishments of both ASEAN and the EU, and how both have been instrumental in the forging of close ties between the two regions in order to create a substantive and mutually beneficial relationship.

The ministers renewed their commitment to reinvigorate and to intensify longstanding dialogue and cooperation on issues of peace and security, the environment and sustainable development, trade and investment, human rights, based on partnership, shared responsibility and mutual benefit. They expressed the belief that stronger economic flows between the two regions will drive the dynamo in ASEAN-EU relations. As economic links strengthen, the role of the private sector will become more vital.

Since 1977, ASEAN and EU have established a strong network of mechanisms to drive ASEAN-EU cooperation. These mechanisms include the already mentioned ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting, the Post-Ministerial Conference, the ASEAN Regional Forum, the ASEAN-EU Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) and the Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC).

The ASEAN-EU political dialogue was expected to sensitize both sides to the security and political considerations and concerns of the



regions on the basis of equality and mutual respect for each others' sovereignty. Frank and candid discussions on issues of common concern to both sides may increase the mutual understanding and comfort level between our two sides;

Where differences existed, the spirit of dialogue and cooperation between ASEAN and EU should continue, keeping in mind that the aim of the dialogue is to enhance mutual understanding and foster greater cooperation and friendship.

It is important to recall that in 1997 both sides agreed to coordinate their efforts in responding to new global challenges, such as the environment, international terrorism, transnational organized crime, trafficking in people, especially in women, and the sexual exploitation of children, drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking, money laundering and diversion of chemical precursors;

Both sides recognized the success of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) which had proven to be an excellent framework for the discussion of political and security issues in the Asia-Pacific Region. The innovative "two-track approach" of the ARF was recognized as offering opportunities for both formal and informal exchange of views between ARF-participants on a wide range of issues. ASEAN Ministers noted with appreciation the sponsorship of ARF "track two" events by the EU.

They welcomed the signing in Bangkok in December 1995 of the Treaty establishing a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in Southeast Asia and the conclusion and signing of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and called on all states to sign and ratify this document. They also welcomed the conclusion of the Fourth Review Conference of the Biological and the Toxin Weapon Convention. They agreed to attach a high priority to efforts to deal with the suffering and destruction caused by the indiscriminate use of

anti-personnel landmines (APLs), and called on states to work towards an international agreement banning the use, stockpile, production and transfer of APLs.

Attention was paid in 1997 to the ASEAN-EU Partenariat as a significant event for small and medium-sized enterprises and for business-to-business cooperation in a broader context.

Business associations and the private sectors of the two regions were encouraged to cooperate in areas of particular importance to the ASEAN and EU.

While considering ASEAN-EU cooperation the two sides reaffirmed their commitment to give priority to the alleviation of poverty, human resource development, health and family planning, the role of women, respect for human rights, environment and sustainable development, taking into account the individual ASEAN countries' needs.

As a general conclusion, the two sides agreed to take action to consolidate, deepen and diversify EU-ASEAN relations in a dynamic manner in particular regarding economic relations. However, after the Singapore meeting the EU-ASEAN relations were negatively affected by the controversy generated by Myanmar's admission to ASEAN in July 1997. A deadlock was reached in their relationship and it ended only in 2000.

What has actually been achieved in 1997-2006 can be assessed on the basis of the Joint Co-Chairmen's Statement of the 16<sup>th</sup> EU-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Nuremberg, dated 15 March 2007 containing 33 paragraphs. (22)

The 16<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting was held in Nuremberg, Germany on 14/15 March 2007. The Meeting was attended by the Foreign Ministers of the EU's members, the Secretary-

General of the Council and High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, the European Commissioner for External Relations and the European Neighbourhood Policy, and the Foreign Ministers of the Association of the South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Secretary General of ASEAN. The Meeting was co-chaired by Germany, as Presidency of the European Union and Cambodia, as the ASEAN Country Coordinator for ASEAN-EU dialogue relations. The Meeting was held in the traditional spirit of openness, trust and solidarity that is the corollary of more than 30 years of dialogue and cooperation.

Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to EU-ASEAN dialogue and co-operation as a cornerstone for the strategic partnership between Asia and Europe.

They reviewed the progress of EU-ASEAN cooperation and commended in particular the swift implementation of the Jakarta Joint Co-Chairmen's Statement tasking the EU-ASEAN Senior Officials to "further strengthen and to reinvigorate the ASEAN-EU process".

Ministers affirmed that EU and ASEAN share fundamental objectives in their wider global agenda and that they both promote effective multilateralism as a means of tackling global challenges, support an open and fair trade system under the WTO, seek to advance human rights and good governance, work in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery, remain engaged in the global fight against terrorism, encourage international co-operation on migration, promote environmentally sustainable development and action on climate change and develop stable, transparent markets in energy and resources.

Ministers welcomed the progress made in

negotiations of Partnership and Cooperation Agreements between the EU and ASEAN which will serve to enhance their political and economic relationships and provide for a comprehensive framework for bilateral and regional cooperation.

Ministers commended the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) as a success in a unique political environment and noted with appreciation that for the first time, EU and ASEAN Member Countries worked together closely in the field of crisis management.

Ministers considered and endorsed the Nuremberg Declaration on an EU-ASEAN Enhanced Partnership, to be analyzed in detail in section 4 of this study, as a major contribution to taking EU-ASEAN relations to a higher level. ASEAN warmly welcomed the EU's/EC's intention to accede to the TAC and at the same time further welcomed the EU's interest to be involved in the East Asia Summit process.

The EU reaffirmed its continued readiness to share its relevant experience in regional integration, including constitutional issues, related to the ongoing drafting of the ASEAN Charter. The existence of a Charter is an absolute prerequisite if ASEAN is to achieve full and effective regional integration as it would be binding on all members. To date, ASEAN decisions have always been based on consensus, which makes the achieving of progress often very slow. According to the Report of the Eminent Persons Group on the ASEAN Charter, this organization is expected to be a "responsible member of the international community to create just and lasting peace all over the world based on the common fundamental values and universal principles". (23)

For its part, the EU has agreed to share its experiences with ASEAN, including as regards regional integration and constitutional issues related to the drafting of the ASEAN Charter.

Ministers reaffirmed their support for the regional co-operation under way in Asia in response to the global threat from terrorism, and in particular for the effort by ASEAN following the successful conclusion of an ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism. (24)

This collective assessment of issues can be compared with the national evaluation made earlier in a document dealing with the tasks of German Foreign Policy at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as drafted by German Federal Foreign Office and dated Berlin, May 2002. (25)

According to this German document, the EU links the promotion of trade and investment with enhanced political dialogue and projects in the fields of cultural and social affairs. At the same time, its goal in so doing is always to strengthen cooperation among the partners themselves.

It cannot be denied that the accession of Myanmar to ASEAN in 1997 impeded deeper political dialogue, which was also sought by the Asian partners, and slowed down work within the framework of the cooperation agreement.

The ARF, founded in 1994, is taking a step-by-step approach and has so far concentrated on confidence-building measures on a voluntary basis. The EU is represented at the top level of Foreign Ministers, who meet once a year, by the troika. Consensus has not yet been reached on preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution mechanisms involving legal obligations.

As the economic weight and political cooperation of the ASEAN countries increase, they are also expected to promote an open and inclusive regional architecture and to become ever more significant partners in shaping international public policy and in resolving urgent global issues, such as protecting the environment and eradicating poverty in Asia. (26)

### **3. THE CHALLENGES**

There are some recent lucid opinions pointing out to the obvious fact that Europe is hardly united on a long list of critical issues, like dealing with the USA, Russia, China, Turkey or Muslims.

But on the other hand the Common Market created a half century ago has evolved into a highly functional economic and social union. The EU's enlargement has served to spread democratic values and economic resources across the entire continent. In spite of such unique achievements, the EU remains a not particularly harmonious group, divided by language, history, tradition and the distinct imprints of their Cold-War years. However, it is recognized that this diversity can prove to be one of Europe's charms and even strengths, but at the same time most Europeans still have a rather vague and not particularly positive image of what their Union is all about. (27)

The challenges facing the EU and ASEAN are becoming more complex and interrelated and must always be treated in a frank and transparent manner. Indeed, ASEAN and the EU should expand and diversify a more meaningful dialogue. In diplomacy, credibility always demands adaptability and visibility. But how and when can it be noticed and achieved?

EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson criticized European nations as being too slow in adapting to changes in Asia, resulting in a failure to take advantage of the fast economic rise of the region. "In many aspects, Europe still has a 20<sup>th</sup>-century policy for a 21<sup>st</sup>-century Asia," he said. Now, both the EU and ASEAN live in a totally different world and have to be more imaginative in overcoming obstacles and outward-looking in finding workable solutions. (28)

The 37 EU and ASEAN countries will again

compare their expectations during the forthcoming session of the UN General Assembly in September 2007. There are promising indications for adequately using this additional opportunity, as they support effective multilateralism and a stronger relationship among UN and regional institutions. Indeed, under the UN's auspices, more positive results can be achieved by relevant initiatives from the EU and ASEAN promoted in a world organization with 192 members.

The restoration of peace in the once rebellious Aceh mentioned above was definitely the most successful example of cooperation between the EU and ASEAN in the last 30 years of their relations. The two multilateral organizations succeeded in supervising the peace agreement between Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), which was achieved following the devastating tsunami that hit Aceh in December 2004.

The end of 2004 and the years 2005 - 2006 have revealed critical challenges that impose a greater commitment to humanity in terms of solidarity and political will. The period 2004-2006 has witnessed in Southeast Asia a historical show of solidarity in response to the apocalyptic tsunami of December 26, 2004. That catastrophe was the result of the greatest earthquake in 40 years, measuring 9.0 on the Richter scale, with its epicenter at 150 kilometers off the west coast of Northern Sumatra in Indonesia and more than 500 kilometers from the West coast of Thailand. Despite the distance, the giant waves struck with an unimaginable power and left behind destruction of biblical proportions. The tsunami was one of the most devastating natural disasters in modern times. Millions of people have been affected in 12 countries.(29)

In this context, in a speech made on January 16, 2005 by Laila Freivalds, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, it was emphasized: "none of

us will forget the warmth and compassion, the generosity and solidarity, shown to the victims and the countries affected. It is this that gives us hope and strength to face the future. We must look ahead." (30)

In the same speech it was recalled that as the next major disaster will probably not be caused by a tsunami, but by something completely different, it is absolutely necessary to improve national capacity for crisis preparedness. Moreover, there is also a need to develop the EU cooperation in the area as a natural part of solidarity within the EU. Some unanswered questions are not limited to the EU, but seem to be valid also for the Asia-Pacific area. How do natural disasters affect security policies? How to improve the instruments for managing crises and disasters? How can traditional security policy instruments be used to alleviate suffering in natural disasters? And how can traditional disaster relief indirectly help in promoting international peace and security, while traditional, international threats have declined?

From such a large perspective, it is quite normal that in their declaration in Nuremberg, the ministers highlighted the "unique experience and success of EU-ASEAN cooperation, such as the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM), and the importance of drawing lessons from the AMM in view of enhancing the EU's experience and strengthening ASEAN's own capacity in crisis management".(31)

The Aceh success story is a milestone for ASEAN and EU, and it can be used as a great model for resolving internal conflicts among their members or conflicts between member states. The readiness of the Indonesian government to soften its rigid adherence to the non-interference principle was one of the keys to success in Aceh.

Another well - visible challenge emerges from the fact that despite the long-standing partnership between the two regional groupings, ASEAN had no prominent place in EU's foreign policy. The EU has been giving more attention to the trans-Atlantic relations with the USA and has demonstrated a preferential hierarchy for the development of countries in Africa, Caribbean, and the Pacific.

ASEM, a forum that involves both EU and ASEAN, apart from the Northeast Asian countries, for instance, has not progressed much because of the different opinions shared by the two regional groupings over certain sensitive issues, such as Myanmar's membership in ASEAN. However, EU's increased interest for ASEAN in recent years has been stimulated by the rise of ASEAN's profile in international relations.

At the same time, ASEAN became the key Asian regional grouping that plays pivotal role in Asia's political-economic relations. In the area of political and security cooperation, ASEAN remains as the principal collective actor for EU in Asia.

Moreover, ASEAN's significant role in developing the ARF process, which is a relatively important security forum in the Asia-Pacific with the participation of key major players in the world, contributed to increasing the stature of this regional grouping in the eyes of EU's policy-makers.

On the economic front, it is a challenging reality that ASEAN has become the key hot-spot in the Asian region. Many strong economic players in the world are keen to forge free trade agreement (FTAs) with either ASEAN, or with its member countries. The USA, Japan, China, Republic of Korea, and even the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) have all either concluded or are planning to negotiate bilateral

free trade agreement with ASEAN and / or its members.

The EU was ASEAN's third largest trading partner, after Japan and the U.S., with a total trade of US\$ 99.6 billion in 2004. The EU is also contributing about 35 percent of total FDI in ASEAN, or about \$20.3 billion. It is in this context that ASEAN policy-makers saw the need to expand trade and investment through an FTA arrangement with the EU. (32)

The EU has long provided benchmarks for regional organizations such as ASEAN on how to deepen regionalism. Policy-makers and intellectuals within the ASEAN region often made references to the European integration process when considering the ASEAN regionalization process.

However, there is a strong belief in ASEAN that the paths pursued by the EU and ASEAN are differed, and it is unlikely that ASEAN integration will follow the EU's pattern. While the EU undertook an incremental institutional building process, ASEAN still has to forge strong regional institutions.

Along with ASEAN's efforts to launch the ASEAN Community in 2015 and the ASEAN Charter, which is to be agreed by ASEAN leaders at the next ASEAN Summit, on November 2007, in Singapore, there has been a change of perception amongst policy-makers in the region on the need to make the Association as a people-based organization. In this context, some voices from Asia might prove relevant in the debate about regionalism, which in the view of some observers gains momentum. (33)

Kobsak Chutikul, a foreign affairs specialist, senior Thai diplomat, in an article entitled **The future of ASEAN depends on mass support**, dated May 20, 2005 asserted that "One lesson



that can be drawn from the recent EU quandary over constitutional referendums is that, in the process of building common institutions and a collective identity to secure a proper place in the world, a regional organization needs to bring its people along from the very start.” Therefore, the author believes that “ASEAN must move forward on all three tracks of government, business/academic, and civil society, if a cohesive regional organization is to be sustained that can stand on equal footing with other centres of power. A grouping that has the enthusiastic support of its people gains not only vibrancy and mass energy, but also respect and clout when dealing with others. .... To obtain mass support, ASEAN must demonstrate that it is relevant to the daily lives of its citizens.” (34)

#### 4. THE SOLUTIONS

The EU and ASEAN pledged to embark on a closer partnership that calls for better cooperation on such key issues as security, climate change and trade. Partnership involves participation and common interest.

Foreign ministers meeting in Nuremberg on March 14-15, 2007 cited climate change as “one of the greatest challenges facing the world today,” and the Europeans and Southeast Asians jointly promised to combat it. They also pledged more cooperation on energy and trade. They committed to the goal of creating a free-trade zone between them while acknowledging that it will happen only in phases, due to economic differences within ASEAN.

EU External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner said the EU-ASEAN free trade drive will not be slowed by the temporary paralysis in global trade negotiations in WTO. The two sides also agreed to launch improved political dialogue and to cooperate better on global and

regional security issues. German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the meeting’s host, said that “cooperation between the EU and ASEAN carried strategic significance.” (35)

On trade, the EU is prepared to encourage further regional integration in Southeast Asia after the region’s leaders agreed in January 2007 to forge a free-trade zone by 2015, five years earlier than previously proposed.

ASEAN foresees a two-step process: From 2010, a free-trade zone would involve the group’s richer members, such as Singapore and Brunei Darussalam, with others following later under agreements reached at the January 2007 summit in the Philippines.

In 2005, the last year for which complete figures are available, EU exports to ASEAN totaled euro 45 billion (US\$59 billion) and imports euro 71 billion (US\$94 billion). The EU also wants ASEAN nations to sign political cooperation agreements committing both sides to regular consultations on democracy, human rights, terrorism and other political issues. Indonesia is expected to be the first to sign such an agreement in 2007. (36)

A more comprehensive review of possible solutions for a more dynamic EU- SEAN Partnership can be done on the basis of a detailed analysis of the most recent and relevant document titled *Nuremberg Declaration on an EU-ASEAN Enhanced Partnership*, adopted by consensus by the 37 participants in the Nuremberg Meeting on March 15, 2007, and reproduced in its entirety in the Appendix of the present issue of *ABAC Journal*.

The 28 paragraphs document starts by reminding the momentum of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ASEAN and the EU Dialogue Relations, the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of

ASEAN and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Rome Treaties.

The EU's and ASEAN's commitment to regional integration and the need to build solid regional organizations, in conformity with the UN Charter, are described as a contribution to addressing regional and global security challenges. The two sides acknowledged the convergence of their interests as envisaged in the ASEAN Vision 2020, the ASEAN Concord II (Bali Concord II), the Vientiane Action Program (VAP) and the Communication from the European Commission on "A New Partnership with Southeast Asia" which provide a strong foundation for further strengthening and expanding dialogue relations and cooperation.

It is remarkable that both sides declared themselves ready to promote universal values of justice, democracy, human rights, good governance, anti-corruption, the rule of law, social equality and caring societies, that are the foundations for lasting peace, stability, progress and prosperity.

A special welcome was expressed for the continuing progress in EU-ASEAN Dialogue Relations, in particular the adoption of the Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument (READI) and the TREATI.

Both sides recognized ASEAN's centrality and the leading role played by ASEAN in all ASEAN-related regional architecture, in particular the ARF as the main forum for regional dialogue and cooperation on political and security issues in the Asia Pacific.

Their objective is to strengthen ASEAN capacity and institution building processes that will contribute to achieving the goal of the ASEAN Community consisting of ASEAN Security Community, ASEAN Economic Community,

ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community through, among other steps, exchange of information and experience between the EU and ASEAN on community building. In more specific terms the EU and ASEAN committed to further enhance their dialogue and cooperation, including at the highest level.

There is a clear cut determination to increase political dialogue between the EU and ASEAN as well as regional and political dialogue through the ARF for advancing the common interest of ASEAN and the EU in promoting peace and stability in the Asia Pacific region, with ASEAN as the driving force.

The EU-ASEAN dialogue in multilateral frameworks is a permanent component of their cooperation, particularly at the UN and the WTO. The two regional entities will promote closer cooperation in addressing and combating terrorism, trafficking in human beings, drug trafficking, sea piracy, arms smuggling, money laundering, cyber-crime and related trans-national crime, by undertaking cooperative efforts in accordance with international law. Other areas of cooperation include: disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. In this respect, the two sides reaffirmed the importance of the implementation and the universalization of the existing disarmament and non-proliferation treaties, conventions and instruments, while recognizing ASEAN's establishment of a nuclear weapon-free zone in Southeast Asia through the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) mines.

For promoting economic cooperation, the two sides will utilize the TREATI and will support the negotiation and implementation of FTA as well as regional integration goals and objectives, in particular the realization of the ASEAN Economic Community by 2015.

Support was expressed for the launch of negotiations between the EU and ASEAN aiming at the conclusion of FTA building on the platform of the WTO, while reaffirming the Doha Development Agenda as the priority for both the EU and ASEAN. There is also common interest to create a conducive environment for more trade, investment and other economic activities between the EU and ASEAN.

Other fields of further cooperation between the two entities include: promoting energy security, sustainable energy and multilateral measures for stable, effective and transparent global energy markets, through an EU-ASEAN policy dialogue on energy; cooperation to enhance capacity building in renewable energies and energy efficiency; the swift implementation of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Kyoto Protocol; cooperation in the field of climate change; cooperation in environmental conservation and protection, sustainable development and natural resource management, and the areas of biodiversity and transboundary environmental pollution control and management; a more effective implementation of the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol; paving the way for the negotiations on a global and comprehensive post-2012 climate regime; promoting measures to meet the UN Convention on Biodiversity target of significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010.

The socio-cultural cooperation has a distinct place in the general economy of the Nuremberg Declaration, the specific aim being to intensify the implementation of the READI, in order to promote and broaden cooperation and relations between the EU and ASEAN on non-trade and non-economic areas.

The two sides will promote: the achievement of the UN Development Goals; join efforts in nurturing human, cultural and natural resources

for sustainable development and build further on the existing friendship, good will and understanding; closer cooperation to address the spread of communicable and infectious diseases, including HIV/AIDS, SARS and avian influenza; the ASEAN Regional Program on Disaster Management; closer cooperation at the regional and global levels on disaster management, preparedness, mitigation and emergency response as well as rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Special attention has been paid to promoting people-to-people contacts involving youth, media academics, think-tank institutions, parliamentary bodies and civil society, and to building and nurturing friendship and understanding between ASEAN and EU through, inter alia, interfaith dialogue and cultural exchanges. The two sides will also foster and deepen cooperation in the fields of arts and culture, information and communication technology, science and technology, and education.

An inventory of issues and intentions is not enough. Therefore, in the final part of the Nuremberg Declaration the two sides welcomed the EU's commitment to continue to support ASEAN Community building efforts, through the current and future ASEAN development cooperation programs, the implementation of the Vientiane Action Programs (VAP), its successor programs as well as the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) and other sub-regional programs which would alleviate poverty, narrow the development gap, and promote sustainable development and integration in ASEAN.

One of the most important and far reaching provisions of the Declaration is contained in the last 28<sup>th</sup> paragraph, according to which the two sides agreed to develop a comprehensive, mutually beneficial, action-orientated, forward-looking and encompassing Plan of Action to implement the Nuremberg Declaration on an EU-

#### ASEAN Enhanced Partnership. (37)

The Nuremberg Declaration is far from being a perfect document. It should be pointed out that all declarations dealing with the EU-ASEAN relationships belong to the category of “soft law”. They contain only recommendations and have no binding value. However, they reflect a broad strategic motivation for more dynamism in the future relations of the partners. It should be noted critically that the Nuremberg Declaration remained silent about many practical aspects related to the proposed FTA.

### 5. THE PROSPECTS

The EU faces difficult problems now and will have more in the future. Political differences between its members have been an obstacle to the effort to increase and accelerate integration, and one result has been that some countries are disillusioned with the EU enough to have voted against the TCE, as mentioned in section I of this study.

Furthermore, stronger nations like France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, which have led the call for integration, nevertheless continue to compete with each other, and this has also sometimes led to discord.

Despite these setbacks, Europeans’ efforts at unity have become a valuable experiment without precedent in human history. Europeans have largely overcome a past full of warfare and have already created a chapter of relations based on tolerance, cooperation, and solidarity.

The EU has tried to speak with a distinct voice about the hegemonic world order, and is taking the lead in solving global problems such as energy and the environment.

At an official ceremony in Berlin to mark the 50th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome, Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel as President of the European Council, President of the European Parliament Hans-Gert Pöttering and President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso signed on March 25, 2007 the Berlin Declaration. (38)

This short document pays tribute to the progress Europe has achieved over the past 50 years. It reminds that for centuries Europe has been an idea, holding out hope of peace and understanding. That hope has been fulfilled. European unification has made peace and prosperity possible. It has brought about a sense of community and overcome differences.

Europeans are striving for peace and freedom, for democracy and the rule of law, for mutual respect and shared responsibility, for prosperity and security, for tolerance and participation, for justice and solidarity. These are fundamental values relevant also for ASEAN, in particular today, in the changing geo-strategic environment.

For ASEAN it may be also interesting to note that the EU anticipates the preservation of the identities and diverse traditions of its members, considering that the Europeans are enriched by open borders and a lively variety of languages, cultures and regions.

In the light of the Berlin Declaration it can be assumed that both ASEAN and EU are facing major challenges which do not stop at national borders. Both are committed to the peaceful resolution of conflicts in the world and to ensuring that people do not become victims of war, terrorism and violence. They want to drive back poverty, hunger and disease.

There is no doubt that education will have a fundamental role in promoting a more dynamic

partnership between the EU and ASEAN in the years/decades to come. This assessment is, in fact, reflected in the Resolution of ASEAN and EU Universities on Regional Cooperation in a Globalizing World. It was adopted at the end of the Third Round Table Meeting in Manila on August 28-31, 2005. The Meeting was attended by 135 University Rectors, vice-rectors, deans of international and academic affairs, representatives from government agencies in ASEAN, and national and international academic umbrella organizations.

It should be recalled that the Bali Concord II of ASEAN envisions an ASEAN economic region with a free flow of goods, services, investment, capital, education and a significant narrowing of gaps in development among and within Member Countries by 2020. This goal is also in keeping with the EU's Lisbon objective of making Europe, by 2010, "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world." (39)

The Bologna process of creating a European Higher Education Area by 2010, and a European Research Area supports regional cooperation in the field of higher education. The participants of the Manila Round Table Meeting welcomed this enhancement of ASEAN-EU and intra-ASEAN dialogue, and the provision of cooperation and funding programs under EU programs. Jointly funded and implemented by AUN and the EC, the ASEAN-EU University Network Program has supported information exchange and cooperation between universities and stakeholder organizations.

Many of these ideas were also developed in 2006 during the European Higher Education Fair and the Asia-Link Symposium focusing on EU-Asia higher education policy and cooperation issues. This event offered a platform for high-level dialogue between government officials, key senior managers and policy makers and representatives

from higher education institutions and academic networks. Consideration was given to increasing awareness of EU mechanisms and programs and possibilities for future cooperation, as well as the impact of the internationalization of higher education on the two continents. (40)

In its report released in 2006 the ASEAN-EU Vision Group asserted that there was a compelling case to take the economic partnership between the EU and ASEAN to a higher level. It considered the diversity of the two entities in terms of levels of development. Gaps persist between the two regions as well as between members of each of the groupings. Nevertheless, sustaining high growth has allowed Southeast Asia to narrow the gap that separates it from developed regions, including Europe. Entering the 21<sup>st</sup> century, economic relations between ASEAN and EU offer lucrative opportunities for expansion and improvement. Given the complementary nature of the diversified economic structures of the two regions, both can expect to sustain trade and investment expansion or even accelerate it in the foreseeable future.

Their overall relationships face no acute threat, but they risk be affected by the constant changes occurring both within the two regions and in their respective regional surroundings, as well as in the global economy at large.

In practical terms, it is significant that the Vision Group recommended the EU and ASEAN to identify a number of priority activities on which attention should be focused over the next two to three years. (41)

It is also cogent to remind that the Helsinki ASEM Summit in September 2006 considered the prospects for ASEM cooperation on the basis of a report entitled "ASEM in its tenth year: Looking back, looking forward." The report concludes that ASEM has not completely met the



expectations placed in it and that its full potential has not been utilized. (42)

Recognizing this reality, the Helsinki meeting attempted to act as a diplomatic catalyst and inject life and dynamism into ASEM. The Helsinki Declaration on the Future of ASEM reiterated the commitment to maintaining and enhancing peace and stability and to promoting conditions conducive to sustainable economic and social development, as well as ASEM's mission as a partnership between equals committed to multilateralism. (43)

China will host ASEM 7 in 2008. Until then, there are a number of "diplomatic tests" that must be passed. One key challenge is to make ASEM more visible and relevant.

ASEM I, in 1996, agreed to cooperate in promoting effective reform and greater democratization of the UN system, in particular as concerns the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and UN finances. (44) ASEM 6 was an appropriate forum for the continuation of the dialogue on UN reform. What outcome might be reported by ASEM 7 in Beijing, in October 2008?

While the EU members will be able to speak with one voice at the UN, the Asian member states have sharp differences on many points. However, all 45 ASEM participants have similar views about multilateralism, with the UN as its centre. Regular contacts between embassies/permanent representations in New York, Brussels, Jakarta or Beijing can enhance the channeling and sharing of useful information. More specifically, ASEAN aspires to speak in the future "with one clear and authoritative voice". (45)

While the EU is currently in "reflection mode" over its TCE, high-growth Asian economies are engaged in an extraordinary race to forge stronger

inter-regional trade and political bonds. Asia and Europe remain more focused on their relations with the United States than with each other, thus defeating one of ASEM's essential goals of building a strong triangular relationship between the USA, Europe and Asia.

All the findings concerning the future of ASEM are highly relevant for the prospects of the EU-ASEAN partnership.

European and Asian countries are able to magnify their mutual interests and conduct complex negotiations leading to a win-win situation. They should further enhance the visibility of their dialogue and partnership. The EU and ASEAN have to revitalize their own capacity to develop new bridges for the future by a more proactive approach of their relationships. The traditional spirit of openness, mutual confidence and understanding meant to galvanize the EU-ASEAN diplomacy should produce more tangible results. In a true partnership, high cordiality in friendship does not justify low intensity in actual cooperation.

Faced with temporary political difficulties of different origins and nature, but also with a pivotal moment in their history, the EU and ASEAN should be able to act with tenacity and vision and take bold decisions within an improved *modus operandi* in order to succeed in their navigation through the unpredictable waters of globalization. "Asian immensities" may acquire new meanings in relation with Europe. (46) Both can cultivate more constructive interactions with each other.

"With the 30 year anniversary of EU-ASEAN partnership this year, we will significantly build on and extend political and security policy ties. This is particularly important as the last ASEAN Summit saw an ambitious Charter project for intensified integration—a project that will bring stability and security to South East Asia",

stated Frank-Walter Steinmeier, German Foreign Minister, in January 2007. (47) This is a topical statement to be put into effect. (48)

Credibility always demands visibility. (49) The EU is already a winning project. Its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary offers invigorating political energy and convincing evidence of its undisputable maturity. This might strongly serve the progress and consolidation of a more dynamic and productive EU-ASEAN partnership in the years to come. (50)

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44. For the documents of ASEM I, including *Towards a Common Vision for Asia and Europe*: Bangkok, 2 March 1996, see <http://asem.inter.net.th> visited on March 12, 2007.
45. See the Report of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) on the ASEAN Charter, par.53.

46. The expression was used by the economist and Nobel laureate Amartya Sen who on March 28, 2008 gave a special lecture to United Nations staff in Bangkok on the subject of “*Asian Immensities*.” Speaking to a packed conference hall, Professor Sen catalogued some of the contributions made by Asian civilizations to the world throughout the centuries, and many of the different ways in which Asians have learned from each other. See the press release about the event at <http://www.unescap.org/unis/press/2007/mar/g08.asp>.
47. See the information available on the site of the German EU Council Presidency at [www.eu2007.de/en](http://www.eu2007.de/en) visited several times in March 2007.
48. Several EU-ASEAN meetings are scheduled for May 2007, including : ASEAN-European Commission ICM; ASEAN-European Commission Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) Meeting; ASEAN Economic Ministers - European Union Consultations (AEM-EU); Senior Economic Officials Meeting - European Union Consultations (SEOM-EU); ASEM Foreign Ministers Meeting in Hamburg.
49. The question of visibility and credibility is analyzed in the comprehensive study about ASEM titled *Looking Back, Looking Forward: ASEM in its Tenth Year. An evaluation of ASEM in its first decade and an exploration of its future possibilities*. See note 17 *supra*. On p.20 it is pointed out that “the lack of profile and visibility is a major problem for ASEM”. It has also a negative impact on the EU-ASEAN relationships.
50. For a more general approach of these issues see the article by Luis Carpio, ***Multilateralism and Regionalism In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Maximising Potentials*** available at <http://www.acs-aec.org/column/index154.htm> See also Luk Van Langenhove, ***Towards a regional world order***, *UN Chronicle*, Sept-Nov, 2004, available at [www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1309](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1309) visited on March 30, 2007.