

**THIRD ASEM CULTURE MINISTERS MEETING
KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA
21 – 24 APRIL 2008**

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

The Third Meeting of the ASEM Culture Ministers was held in Kuala Lumpur on April 22 and 23, 2008. The meeting was focused on the theme: "**Cultural Diversity – Realizing the Action Plan**". The meeting was attended by delegations from **36 countries** and the European Commission, civil society members and the Asia Europe Foundation.

The Ministers' proceedings came as a follow up to:

- the **Sixth ASEM Summit of Helsinki (10-11 September 2006)** of Heads of State and Government, which encouraged the Ministers of Culture, assisted by preparatory work undertaken by the Culture Senior Officials, to meet regularly,
- the **Second Meeting of ASEM Culture Ministers in Paris in June 2005**, with the theme: "Cultural Diversity: Opportunities and Challenges – ASEM's long term plan",
- the **Fifth ASEM Summit of Hanoi in October 2004**, with the adoption of the ASEM Declaration on Dialogue Among Cultures and Civilizations, which called for the development of a long term plan on promoting dialogue among civilizations and stepping up cultural exchanges and cooperation between Asia and Europe.

ASEM Culture Ministers reiterated their support and commitment towards further promotion of cultural interactions between the peoples of Asia and Europe. They reinforced their belief that dialogue and cooperation among cultures and civilizations are essential means and the best ways to overcome ignorance and prejudice and further promote mutual understanding and tolerance among peoples.

With this in mind, they reaffirmed their determination to respect, protect and promote cultural diversity and the equal dignity of all cultures, and therefore encourage the expeditious ratification of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, by all ASEM partners in Asia and Europe as well as the need for actions for the implementation of the Convention.

In this context, they welcome the joint initiative of Vietnam and the European Commission to hold an ASEM Seminar on the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, in Vietnam if possible before the ASEM Summit in Beijing in 2008. This seminar should offer an opportunity for officials and civil society representatives to exchange views and experiences on the ratification and implementation of this convention.

The third meeting enabled ASEM Culture Ministers to step up cultural exchanges and cooperation between Asia and Europe in order to deepen their commitment in the field of culture as identified through the **Action Plan of Culture Ministers** adopted in the Second ASEM Conference on Culture and Civilizations (ASEM Second Culture Ministers Meeting) in Paris in June 2005. The action plans envisage to encourage cultural interactions among the peoples of Asia and Europe at all levels.

With a set of policy directions and an Action Plan in place, ASEM Culture Ministers focus on translating the policy directions and the long term plans into concrete programmes and activities for cooperation among ASEM members and the civil society and

to truly benefit the communal, national, regional and eventually, global arts and cultural scenes.

ASEM Culture Ministers reaffirm their commitment on the implementation of the **Cultural Action Plan** adopted in the Culture Ministers Meeting in Paris as set out in the appended action plan, in particular by:

- further enhancing the networking amongst professionals in the cultural and audiovisual fields through existing professional networks;
- promoting exchanges and fostering the circulation of performances, exhibitions, literary works and audiovisual programmes between European and Asian countries, and to elaborate a calendar of events;
- facilitating the development of co-productions and cooperation between theatres, art centres, museums, publishers, audiovisual operators, as well as that of artist residences and training courses for young professionals;
- encouraging initiatives aimed at promoting understanding of the diverse cultures particularly among the younger generation;
- paying special attention to projects regarding sustainable and responsible cultural tourism, as well as the promotion of culture as a development factor;
- encouraging participation in cultural activities organized at ASEM Summits; and
- appointing within the existing structures, permanent Cultural Points of Contact to link the relevant administrations and to encourage flows of expertise

ASEM Culture Ministers commended and fully support the move by member countries towards realizing the action plans for fostering closer cultural relationship between Europe and Asia.

They further affirmed their belief that culture is an important development factor in achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals and discussed the increasing potential of culture to support marginalized sectors and creative industries, thus contributing towards economic growth, competitiveness, job creation, a balanced environment, social cohesion and peace. Parallel to this, they reiterated their commitment to ensure effective protection of intellectual property rights and matters related to it.

To this end, they also encourage enhanced cooperation in the field of cultural statistics in order to establish a basis for reliable and comparable data and to device workable indicators for the realization and successful implementation of the action plan.

Further, in appreciating the richness and the variety of cultural festivals and cultural years in both Asian and European countries, ASEM Culture Ministers called for actions to be carried out in Asia in the field of Intercultural Dialogue, parallel to and in cooperation with the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue in 2008.

ASEM Culture Ministers reinforced their support in the role played by the Asia Europe Foundation (ASEF) and its flagship programmes in aligning ASEF activities with ASEM priorities as set out by the Heads of Government Summit. They welcome and

endorse all efforts to secure the long-term financial sustainability of ASEF.

As fully endorsed at the First and Second ASEM Culture Ministers Meetings, Ministers commended ASEF for continuously spearheading the development of **Culture360**, an Asia-Europe cultural web-portal to connect thousands of cultural practitioners of the two regions, facilitating bi-regional cooperation in the arts as well as promoting the exchange of ideas, information and experts in the ASEM countries.

Ministers welcome the introduction and presentation of the **Culture360** portal during the Third ASEM Culture Ministers Meeting in Malaysia, showing not only a concrete deliverable of the ASEM process facilitated by ASEF, but also a long term and unique web-based project to enhance art and cultural exchange among ASEM member countries.

Ministers requested ASEF to continuously develop Culture360 and entrusted their engagement and financial support to make this unique initiative a sustainable success. Ministers proposed that the launching of the **Culture360** portal be included in the preparatory process for the Seventh ASEM Summit scheduled to be held in Beijing, China in October 2008.

Ministers agreed on the importance of monitoring progress on their recommendations, and to this end: asked Senior Officials to prepare a progress report in advance of the next ASEM CMM; invited ASEF to report at ASEM CMM on the development and

effectiveness of the Culture360 portal; and encouraged ASEM member countries to list and update cultural and heritage activities and to invite participation through the Culture360 portal.

Ministers also recommended that a Cultural Festival participated by ASEM member countries be held at the ASEM Summit and ASEM CMM.

Ministers warmly welcomed the two acceding EU Member States Bulgaria and Romania on the European side, as well as India, Mongolia, Pakistan and the ASEAN Secretariat as new members from the Asian side, to participate in the ASEM process via active participation and continuous commitment towards making ASEM as an effective forum between Asia and Europe.

ASEM Culture Ministers welcomed Poland's offer to host the Fourth ASEM Culture Ministers Meeting and looked forward to meeting again in 2010.

ASEM culture Ministers wish that the conclusions of this declaration can be taken into account in the preparation of the next meeting of the head of states and governments to be held in Beijing on October 24th and 25th 2008.

Kuala Lumpur
April 23, 2008