



19 October

## **APGC Plan for Areas of Focus and Related Actions on Connectivity**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The 11<sup>th</sup> ASEM Summit held in Ulaanbaatar in 2016 established the ASEM Path Finder Group on Connectivity (APGC) with a two-year mandate to provide a platform for coordinating engagement and activity on connectivity, and to further explore ASEM's added value in this area. Since its inception, the APGC has made notable progress in its endeavour to find a suitable path for ASEM connectivity cooperation, notably by agreeing a definition of connectivity at the 13<sup>th</sup> ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Myanmar in November 2017.

As stipulated in the APGC Terms of Reference, ASEM partners would explore potential areas of focus. This joint framework of possible 'Tangible Areas of Cooperation in the Field of Connectivity' (TACCs) could serve as a guiding tool for the competent ASEM bodies to take the process forward and conduct activities aiming at pragmatic results within their areas of expertise.

The APGC is co-chaired by the EEAS and the EU presidency for the European group and China and Japan for the Asian group.

### **II. WAY FORWARD**

Starting from these areas of focus and based on voluntary participation, ASEM partners could enhance and deepen their cooperation in areas of their interests and needs. As good practices accumulate and member countries' interest rises, ASEM TACC could progressively develop a solid basis which could, over time and when the need arises, expand into more areas, with the aim of the widest possible participation of ASEM members.

To avoid duplicating work, future ASEM connectivity activities will rely on existing sectoral mechanisms, including the use of thematic ASEM ministerial meetings, preparatory SOMs, Directors General (DG) meetings and other competent ASEM for a.

ASEM partners' participation in these areas will be on a voluntary basis and consistent with their own national interests.

The outcomes of any work in these areas should be presented to the full set of ASEM partners for discussion as well as for endorsement of relevant policy recommendations. It will be important to ensure that work in TACC will contribute to on-going work in competent sectoral international organisations and not duplicate it. ASEM could be used to discuss how to best take work forward in relevant international fora, as well as involving private business and industry in the implementation of TACC.

### **III. AREAS OF FOCUS**

#### **Area of Focus 1: Connectivity Policies**

ASEM partners to exchange lessons learnt emerging from their national or sub-regional initiatives, plans and strategies and foster best practices as well as promote the relevant international standards.

#### **Area of Focus 2: Sustainable Connectivity**

##### **(1) Promotion of quality infrastructure**

ASEM partners to discuss the contribution of the development of smart, quality infrastructure which should be affordable, accessible, mutually beneficial to ensure inclusive, sustainable, resilient and quality growth, as well as openness, transparency, taking into account international standards as well as national and sub-regional particularities and different needs.

##### **(2) Sustainability of financing**

ASEM partners to enhance dialogue on how to ensure the financial sustainability of connectivity projects, including the role of multilateral development banks.

##### **(3) Sustainable Supply Chains**

ASEM partners to focus on exchanging lessons learnt and best practices regarding

sustainable supply chains and where relevant, involving the private sector and applying international guidelines.

**(4) Ensuring free, open and safe maritime transportation**

ASEM partners to focus on maritime connectivity, since a free and open ocean is one of the preconditions for the promotion of connectivity, with a special focus on freedom of navigation, the peaceful settlement of disputes, navigation safety and environment protection.

**(5) Clean energy technologies**

ASEM cooperation to promote the sharing of policy experiences on energy technologies supporting energy savings, eco-innovation and the deployment and integration of renewable energy, low emission technologies with a view to contribute to sustainable and inclusive economic growth and job creation.

**Area of Focus 3: Trade and Investment Connectivity**

**(1) Free, open and vibrant trade and investment**

ASEM partners to discuss connectivity activities in the field of trade and investment and how best to ensure free and open trade on a level-playing field based on the rules-based, open, transparent, inclusive and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system centred on the WTO.

**(2) Customs clearance facilitation**

ASEM partners to continue their discussion under the relevant existing ASEM framework such as the meetings of Custom Directors General/Commissioners on how to enhance their cooperation in this field and make it more concrete. To this end, ASEM customs are encouraged to strengthen connectivity through closer cooperation on Single Window.

**(3) Promote Transport Connectivity**

ASEM partners to discuss ways on how to improve sustainable transport connectivity between Asia and Europe, in an efficient manner, taking into account fiscal and environmental sustainability, through integrated intermodal and multimodal transport systems, innovative digital solutions and infrastructure.

## **Area of Focus 4: Future Connectivity and Digital Economy**

### **(1) Digital Economy and Digital Infrastructure**

**ASEM partners to address current and future challenges concerning the rapid digitalisation of the economy, taking into account the upcoming Fourth Industrial Revolution to ensure development of the necessary regulatory framework and network infrastructure.**

### **(2) Cross-border e-commerce, including encouraging involvement of the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs)**

**ASEM partners to discuss how to encourage MSMEs participation in cross-border e-commerce business opportunities, integration into the global supply chains and releasing market potential.**

## **Area of Focus 5: People-to-People Connectivity**

### **(1) Internationalisation and mobility in education, including student exchanges**

**ASEM partners to discuss cooperation on education, including vocational education, as a significant driver of innovative growth as well as quality assurance and recognition, and credit transfer, engaging business and industry in education and promoting balanced mobility of international students and researchers.**

### **(2) Facilitating international travel of tourists and sustainable tourism**

**ASEM partners to discuss efforts to promote sustainable and inclusive tourism across the two continents thus intensifying people-to-people connectivity.**

### **(3) Mobility of cultural professionals and artists**

**ASEM partners to discuss the mobility of cultural professionals and artists, as well as cooperation in all areas of culture, which contributes to better mutual understanding and inclusive social and economic development.**

### **(4) Empowerment of Women**

**ASEM partners to enhance dialogue and cooperation on ways and means to enhance the empowerment of women.**

### **(5) Common response to global ageing**

**ASEM partners to exchange lessons learnt and best practices in tackling effects arising**

from ageing populations and how best to maintain the vitality and sustainable development of ageing societies and ensure the protection and promotion of the human rights of the elderly including eradicating age discrimination.

### **Area of Focus 6: Security challenges linked to connectivity**

**(1) Strengthening security against extremism, the threat of terrorism and the malicious use of ICT**

The ASEM partners to exchange lessons learnt and best practices on how to counter the negative impacts of enhanced connectivity, with a focus on the security angle including terrorism and the malicious use of ICT.

**(2) Infectious disease control**

ASEM partners to exchange lessons learnt and best practices on how to counter the increasing risks of pandemic of infectious diseases and how to ensure better international cooperation.

**(3) Food Security**

The ASEM partners to discuss ways on how to ensure food security for future generations, including research and development (R&D) in agricultural productivity, farm practices, conservation of agro-biodiversity and the use of advanced technologies to mitigate the effects of climate change.

## **IV. RELATED ACTIONS**

To achieve the goals described above, interested ASEM partners are encouraged to undertake the following activities under relevant area of focus. Other innovative activities are welcomed.

- Organising workshops, seminars, or training courses
- The collection and sharing of best practices and lessons learnt
- Supporting related studies from the existing Asia Europe Think Tank Dialogue network.

## **V. FUTURE OF THE APGC**

The ASEM Pathfinder Group on Connectivity has concluded its mandate and proposes that further work on connectivity be pursued appropriately at the Senior Officials' level.

ANNEX

**ASEM “Tangible Areas of Cooperation in the field of Connectivity”**

| Area                                    | Sub-area   | Interested ASEM-Partners | Competent ASEM forum (TBD)                                |
|---|--|--------------------------|---|
| Sustainable Connectivity                | A. Promotion of quality infrastructure   |                          | TMM   |
|   | B. Sustainability of financing   |                          | FinMM   |
|   | C. Sustainable Supply Chain  |                          | EMM   |
|   | D. Ensuring free, open and safe maritime transportation                        |                          | TMM   |
|   | E. Energy efficient technology   |                          | TBD   |
| Trade and Investment Connectivity       | A. Free, open and vibrant trade  |                          | EMM   |
|   | B. Customs Clearance facilitation  |                          | EMM and Customs Directors General/Commissioners' Meeting  |
|   | C. Business and Investment friendly environment                                |                          | EMM   |
|   | D. Promote transport connectivity  |                          | TMM   |
| Future Connectivity and Digital Economy | A. Digital Economy and Digital Infrastructure                                  |                          | EMM   |
|   | B. Cross-border e-commerce, including encouraging MSMEs' involvement           |                          | EMM and Customs Directors, General/Commissioners' Meeting |
| People-to-People Connectivity           | A. Internationalisation and mobility in education, including student exchanges |                          | ME  |
|   | B. Facilitating international travel of tourists and sustainable tourism       |                          | CMM   |
|   | C. Mobility of cultural professionals and artists                              |                          | CMM   |
|   | D. Empowerment of Women  |                          | TBD   |
|   | E. Common response to global ageing  |                          | LEMC (Lab.Min.)   |

|  |   |  |     |
|--|---|--|-----|
| Security challenges linked to connectivity | A. Strengthening security against violent extremism, threat of terrorism, cyber-attacks and challenges to the international order |  | FMM |
|  | B. Infectious diseases control  |  | TBD |
|  | C. Food security  |  | TBD |