

ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting
15-16 December 2019
Madrid, Spain

Chair's Statement, 16 December 2019

1. The 14th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting (ASEM FMM14) took place on 15-16 December 2019 in Madrid under the theme: **Asia and Europe: together for effective multilateralism**. The meeting was chaired by H.E. Josep Borrell, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission, and attended by Foreign Ministers or their senior representatives from all 53 ASEM partners.
2. Ministers highlighted the role of ASEM in strengthening Europe-Asia relations at a time of rapid global change and reaffirmed ASEM's core principles: dialogue, informality, flexibility, equality and mutual respect, the spirit of consensus, and mutual benefit. Ministers stressed the importance of ASEM moving with the times to safeguard its strategic relevance and enhance its impact and visibility.
3. Ministers underlined the value of ASEM as a building block for strong and **effective multilateralism and the rules-based international order**, anchored in international law with the UN at its core. They reconfirmed their readiness to work together for peace and security, inclusive and sustainable development and growth, and the promotion and protection of human rights, on the basis of the UN Charter and in compliance with international law.
4. Ministers stressed the need to address pressing common **global challenges**, on the basis of a strong commitment to multilateralism. At a time when the international order based on the rule of law and international law is being challenged, ASEM partners reiterated their resolve to uphold and strengthen cooperative, multilateral and plurilateral approaches.
5. Ministers underlined that priority challenges for enhanced ASEM cooperation include the need for ambitious **climate action** and called for accelerated action to implement the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**.
6. Ministers reaffirmed the need to uphold, strengthen and reform **the rules-based multilateral trading system with the WTO at its core**. They will work to ensure a level-playing field, and to fight protectionism in all its forms, including protectionist unilateral measures. They emphasised that the WTO's binding dispute settlement system has successfully contributed to the respect of WTO rules. The predictability of the multilateral trading system helps to avoid unilateral measures. They underlined the urgency to overcome the impasse in the appointment of members to the Appellate Body, to initiate its selection process promptly, as well as to ensure the proper functioning of the dispute settlement system. Ministers stressed the importance of the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference to be held in Nur-Sultan in June 2020 delivering tangible outcomes for the global trading system.
7. Ministers reiterated their support for the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the **centrality of ASEAN** in the evolving regional architecture. Ministers appreciated ASEAN's role in promoting dialogue, confidence building, and cooperation for peace, security, stability and prosperity in the region and beyond. They commended ASEAN's endeavours in expanding its relations with other ASEM partners and noted the interest of the European ASEM partners in furthering engagement with the region through all relevant ASEAN-led processes.
8. Ministers underlined the importance of **gender equality**, the full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls and their empowerment for the whole ASEM agenda. This includes issues of direct concern to Foreign Ministers such as peace, security and sustainable development. Ministers noted the diverse roles, including leadership roles, played by women in conflict-prevention and resolution, mediation and peacebuilding, peacekeeping, as well as in

peace processes, and the importance of mainstreaming a gender perspective in these areas. They stressed their commitment to full implementation of UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security, and its follow-up resolutions, and underlined the importance of addressing all forms of sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict.

Regional Issues

9. Ministers expressed concern over the international security situation and encouraged all partners to advance efforts to strengthen global stability.
10. Ministers underlined that the complete denuclearisation of and establishment of a permanent peace regime on the **Korean peninsula** are vital for global and regional peace and stability. They expressed their support for a peaceful, diplomatic and political solution to the situation on the Korean Peninsula. They reiterated their support for the full and expeditious implementation of the Panmunjom Declaration and Pyongyang Joint Declaration, as well as of the Singapore Joint Statement by the United States and DPRK.
11. Ministers reaffirmed their support for the full implementation of UNSC resolutions on the DPRK. They called on the DPRK to bring about the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement by the DPRK of its nuclear and other Weapons of Mass Destruction and its ballistic missile programmes to fulfil its commitment made to complete denuclearisation and to refrain from further nuclear and ballistic missile tests.
12. Ministers noted that UNSC resolution 2397 affirms an intent to keep DPRK's actions under continuous review and to strengthen, modify, suspend or lift restrictive measures in the light of the DPRK's compliance. They exchanged views on efforts to address the humanitarian needs and the human rights situation in the DPRK, including the abductions issue.
13. Ministers underlined the importance of implementing the Arrangements on Return of the Displaced Persons from **Rakhine State** between Myanmar and Bangladesh and the MOU between the Myanmar Government, The Office of the UNHCR and UNDP. They called for a durable and sustainable solution and for the creation of the conditions conducive to safe, dignified, sustainable and voluntary return of displaced persons. Ministers underlined the importance of accountability and took note of the national and international efforts in this regard. Ministers expressed their continued support to bring peace, stability, rule of law and reconciliation among various communities, as well as to ensure sustainable and equitable development in Rakhine State. Ministers encouraged Myanmar to continue to implement the remaining recommendations of the final report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State.
14. Regarding **Iran**, Ministers expressed their collective support for the full and effective implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) by all sides. The JCPOA was unanimously endorsed by the UNSC in Resolution 2231 and is a key element of the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture in all its aspects. Ministers recalled that both nuclear commitments and lifting of sanctions are essential parts of the agreement. They expressed serious concerns about a series of developments, in particular the recent steps with regard to the implementation of Iran's nuclear commitments under the JCPOA. They also called for restraint and de-escalation of current tensions in the wider region while encouraging initiatives fostering dialogue among all relevant parties.
15. Ministers stressed the importance of strengthening cooperation on peace and security issues of common interest and concern including **Syria, Yemen, Libya in the Middle East and North Africa and the Gulf area** in full respect of sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity of the countries and international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law. Ministers underlined their commitment to the two-state solution for the **Israeli-Palestinian conflict** as the only viable way of achieving lasting peace, enabling Israelis and Palestinians to live side by side in peace and security.

16. On **Ukraine**, Ministers called on all parties to fully implement the package of measures of the Minsk Agreements, endorsed by the UNSCR 2202.

Ministers reaffirmed their full support for UNSCR 2166.

17. Ministers reiterated their commitment to long-term peace and stability in **Afghanistan** and the need for the cessation of violence and the effective fight against terrorism, as well as the need for the peace process to be Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and inclusive. Ministers called for a meaningful contribution to the peace process by all international and regional stakeholders.

Security Issues

18. Ministers reiterated their condemnation of **terrorism** and violent extremism conducive to terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Ministers called for progress in the negotiations of the UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism. They emphasised that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable regardless of their motivations, whenever, wherever and by whomsoever committed. They reaffirmed that terrorism poses a threat to international peace and security and that countering this threat requires collective efforts on national, regional and international levels on the basis of international law. Ministers stressed that states have the primary responsibility in countering terrorist acts and violent extremism. States must ensure that any measures to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism comply with all their obligations under international law, including the UN Charter, international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law, including the promotion and protection of the rights of the victims of terrorism.
19. Ministers called on ASEM partners to enhance exchanges and cooperation on the prevention of radicalisation and exploitation of information and communication technology (ICT) for terrorist purposes, to counter the financing of terrorism. Ministers also addressed the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters, returnees and relocators, on the basis of the need to bring perpetrators to justice and, where applicable, extradite or prosecute.
20. Ministers re-affirmed their commitment to maintaining peace, stability and ensuring **maritime security** and safety, to uphold freedom of navigation and overflight, unimpeded economic activities, and to combat piracy and armed robbery at sea, in full compliance with international law, in particular the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), in the interest of all. Ministers expressed concern and discouraged actions that destabilise and increase tensions. They called for the peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with international law; to refrain from unilateral actions that are against international law and the threat or use of force in violation of the UN Charter; to respect diplomatic processes as well as the rights of coastal states in their maritime zones, and promote confidence-building measures.
21. Ministers agreed to enhance ASEM cooperation on **ICT and digital connectivity** for a global, peaceful, open, stable and secure ICT environment while protecting human rights and freedoms online and respecting applicable domestic and international legal frameworks. Ministers recalled the need for stability and security in cyberspace on the basis of applicable international law, in particular the UN Charter, and universal norms, rules and principles for responsible state behaviour, upholding the central role of the UN in the development of ICT security issues. Ministers underlined the importance of the development and implementation of confidence building measures, in particular in regional fora, which aim to enhance cooperation and help prevent the risks of conflict stemming from the use of ICTs. At a time where digitalisation is transforming every aspect of our economies and societies, and data is increasingly becoming an important source of economic growth, and its effective use should contribute to social well-being. Ministers pledged to enhance cooperation to promote data security and data free flow with trust, respecting applicable domestic and international legal frameworks for privacy and data protection.

Global Issues

22. Ministers reiterated their commitment for the full implementation of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and to build an inclusive and sustainable future for all, while welcoming the outcome of the UN SDG Summit in September 2019. Ministers emphasised the importance of the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, as well the protection of human rights, are indispensable requirements for sustainable development. They called for a paradigm shift to forge a virtuous cycle of environmentally-conscious growth, while stressing that sustainable development, security and human rights are mutually reinforcing. Ministers stressed the role of young people, civil society and various stakeholders, including responsible business. They highlighted the positive role of ASEM cooperation and the exchanges of best practices and capacity building on education, research, science, innovation and technology to fight inequality and poverty.
23. Ministers expressed support for the sustainable use of **marine resources** and commended bi-regional cooperation such as that between the Danube and Mekong regions as a model for how to transform transboundary water management and food security challenges into opportunities for sustainable development. Ministers called for greater ASEM cooperation on bio-diversity and on countering deforestation and desertification including sustainable water management and looked forward to a successful outcome of the COP15 on Biodiversity in Kunming and the 2020 UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon.
24. On **climate change**, Ministers highlighted the urgency of a full and prompt implementation of the Paris Agreement, through ambitious climate mitigation and adaptation action, including a clean energy transition decoupling economic growth from greenhouse gas emissions and sustainable finance shift, reducing greenhouse emissions from unsustainable forestry practices and land-use. They called for ambitious climate actions at all levels, with broad participation from all stakeholders, in line with the principles of UN FCCC and the Paris Agreement, including equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances.
25. Ministers recognised that the transition towards a climate-neutral economy in accordance with best available science by the second half of this century according to the **Paris Agreement** requires strengthened cooperation on both mitigation and adaptation, including disaster risk reduction, particularly for vulnerable communities. They welcomed the initiative of UN Secretary General to convene the UN Climate Action Summit, 23 September 2019. They also welcomed the Chile-Madrid Time for Action declaration adopted at the COP25 in Madrid in December 2019.
26. Ministers called on all parties, to enhance global ambition and to communicate or update their Nationally Determined Contributions. They expressed profound concern that current global efforts are insufficient to meet the temperature goal of the Paris Agreement, including by pursuing efforts to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels. Ministers stressed the importance of mobilising adequate finance, both public and private, and of technological and capacity-building assistance to support mitigation and adaptation. Ministers underlined the need to address the broad implications of climate change for stability and to strengthen the resilience of climate-affected societies.
27. Ministers expressed serious concern and confirmed their intent to prevent plastic **marine litter and micro plastics** entering the ocean, to develop appropriate national action plans and to enhance international cooperation for prevention and reduction of plastic litter and micro plastics in waterways and oceans. Based on the 3Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle), they called for a comprehensive life-cycle approach and strengthened ASEM cooperation on the circular economy.

Sustainable Connectivity

28. Ministers underlined the enormous value of boosting **sustainable connectivity** between Europe and Asia as a way to bring countries, people and societies closer together, and contribute to development and capacity building. They recalled the ASEM Definition of Connectivity agreed at ASEM FMM13 which enshrined the need to uphold market principles and agreed international rules, norms and standards. ASEM partners underlined the shared interest to promote connectivity including deeper transport, energy, digital, and people-to-people ties, respecting a level playing field, openness, transparency, economic viability, fiscal, financial, social and environmental sustainability. They recognised the importance of reliable, resilient, sustainable and high-quality infrastructure. Ministers recalled the need for connectivity investments to comply with agreed international principles.
29. Ministers reiterated the need for a sustainable and comprehensive approach to boosting ASEM connectivity, working in close partnership with relevant stakeholders including business, international and regional organisations. Ministers recalled the **Tangible Areas of Connectivity Cooperation (TACC)** agreed at ASEM12 Summit in Brussels and assessed the rate of progress in implementing those TACC areas assigned to Ministers. They welcomed all activities and projects aimed at strengthening ASEM connectivity as listed in Annex 1. Ministers looked forward to a successful outcome of the 2nd UN Global Sustainable Transport Conference in Beijing.
30. Ministers welcomed the outcomes of the 7th ASEM Education Ministerial held in Bucharest on 15-16 May 2019 and of the 5th ASEM Transport Ministerial held in Budapest on 10-11 December 2019.
31. Ministers commended the work of the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) in strengthening people-to-people exchanges between Europe and Asia through different projects including the ASEM Cultural Festival, the 9th Model ASEM as well as the 12th ASEF Journalists' Seminar.

32. Ministers thanked the Chair and the Host for the successful outcome of the 14th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Madrid and for the warm hospitality accorded to all. Ministers looked forward to the 13th ASEM Summit to be held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia in 2020.

Annex

ASEM activities in the field of connectivity since the 12th ASEM Summit in Brussels in October 2018

| Date | ASEM Meetings / ASEM Initiatives | Venue | Co-sponsors |
|---------------------------|--|---------------------------|---|
| 20-21 November 2018 | ASEM Education in a Digital World: Bridging the Continents - Connecting the People? | Cologne, Germany | Germany |
| 22 November 2018 | ASEM Conference on "Inclusive Growth and Cooperation among ASEM Economies in the Era of the 4 th Industrial Revolution" | Seoul, Korea | Korea |
| 3 December 2018 | ASEM Symposium on Promoting Tourism in Zagreb | Zagreb, Croatia | Japan, Croatia |
| 19 February 2019 | ASEM TEIN (Trans-Eurasia Information Network) Cooperation Center Governors' Meeting (5 th Asi@Connect Governors' Meeting) | Daejeon, Korea | EU, Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam |
| 7-8 March 2019 | ASEM High-level Meeting on Marine Sustainability | Bangkok, Thailand | Thailand |
| 15 May 2019 | 11 th ASEM-Duo Expert Meeting | Bucharest, Romania | Korea |
| 16-17 May 2019 | ASEM Conference on "Promoting Economic and Social Inclusion in Asia & Europe" | Nha Trang, Viet Nam | Viet Nam |
| 2-3 July 2019 | 10 th ASEM Customs-Trade Day; 13 th Meeting of ASEM Working Group on Customs Matters | Brussels, Belgium | EU |
| 22 July 2019 | ASEM TEIN (Trans-Eurasia Information Network) Cooperation Center Governors' Meeting (6 th Asi@Connect Governors' Meeting) | Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia | EU, Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam |

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|----------------------------|---|---------------------------|---|
| 10-11 September 2019 | Asia-Europe Innovation & Development Forum: “Innovation for Development: Fostering New Growth Drivers” | Qingdao, China | China |
| 19-20 September 2019 | 8 th ASEM Sustainable Development Dialogue: “Enhancing Water Partnership towards the Sustainable Development & Inclusive Growth” | Siem Reap, Cambodia | Cambodia |
| 1-2 October 2019 | 4th ASEM Conference on Global Ageing & Human Rights of Older Persons | Seoul, Korea | Korea, EU |
| 9-10 October 2019 | 13 th ASEM Directors-General (DGs) Meeting: 2020-2021 ASEM Customs Action Plan | Ha Long City, Viet Nam | Viet Nam |
| 10 October 2019 | 3 rd ASEM High-level Meeting on Disability: “Break Barriers for Inclusive Development” | Beijing, China | China |
| 16-17 October 2019 | 7th ASEM Working Group Seminar on SME Eco-Innovation Competence | Korea | Korea |
| 25 October 2019 | ASEM Seminar on Enhancing Human Capital for Sustainable Digital Connectivity | Bangkok, Thailand | Thailand, China, Estonia, EU, Finland, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Viet Nam |
| 29-31 October 2019 | ASEM Seminar on Single Window Cooperation | Hangzhou, China | China |
| 2019 | STIpot.com Initiative | | Russia |

Future ASEM activities in the field of connectivity

| Date | ASEM Meetings / ASEM Initiatives | Venue | Partners |
|------------------------------|---|---------------------|---|
| 26-28 February 2020 | The Asia-Europe Sustainable Connectivity Scientific Conference (AESCON) to develop the ASEM Sustainable Connectivity Portal. | Singapore | European Commission's Joint Research Centre, ASEF, the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia and the Center for China and Globalization |
| March 2020 | ASEM TEIN (Trans-Eurasia Information Network) Cooperation Center Governors' Meeting (7 th Asi@Connect Governors' Meeting) | Kathmandu, Nepal | EU, Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam |
| June 2020 | ASEM Seminar on Public Health Emergencies | Thailand | Thailand |
| August 2020 | ASEM TEIN (Trans-Eurasia Information Network) Cooperation Center Governors' Meeting (8 th Asi@Connect Governors' Meeting) | Hong Kong, China | EU, Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam |
| TBC (first-half of 2020) | ASEM High-level Dialogue on Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment in the Digital Age | Viet Nam | Australia, China, Denmark, Japan, Italy, Indonesia, Norway |
| TBC (second-half of 2020) | 20 th Informal ASEM Seminar on Human Rights: "Promotion and Protection of Human Rights of Older Persons" | Gyeongju, Korea | ASEF, Korea |

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|---------------------------|---|----------|----------------|
| TBC (second-half of 2020) | ASEM Youth Camp on Marine Sustainability | Thailand | Thailand |
| TBC | Education SOM in India | TBC | |
| TBC | Digital Education SOM in Germany | TBC | |
| TBC | 8 th ASEM Working Group Seminar on SME Eco-Innovation Competence | Denmark | Denmark, Korea |

Other activities and agreements in the field of connectivity

| Activities / Agreements | Sponsors |
|--|--|
| G-Global Platform for Communication | Kazakhstan |
| Interregional Coordination Committee on Transport between Asia and Europe (ICCTAE) | UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) |
| Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network | UNESCAP |
| Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network | UNESCAP |
| Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports | UNESCAP |