

Kildare, 17 April 2004,

ASEM Declaration on Multilateralism

The present international situation is undergoing complex and profound changes. Challenges have emerged which are multi-faceted and global in scope. Countries share greater common interests and are becoming increasingly interdependent.

ASEM Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to multilateralism and to a fair and just rules-based international order, with a strong United Nations at its heart, to resolve international disputes, to promote positive aspects of globalization, and to advance democratization of international relations.

ASEM Ministers acknowledged the need for strong and effective international institutions to bring the objectives of the global agenda forward, including the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, the fight against poverty and hunger, the protection of culture diversity, fostering respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms, combating terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and implementing the outcomes of major conferences, in particular the World Summit on Sustainable Development and World Summit on the Information Society. Ministers also pointed to the benefits which accrue from an effective rules-based multilateral trading system under the aegis of the WTO and urged all parties to work towards a successful outcome of the Doha negotiations and the implementation of the Monterey Consensus.

ASEM Ministers expressed their willingness to intensify their cooperation in supporting the relevant activities of specialised programmes, funds and agencies of the United Nations as well as of the Bretton Woods Institutions. To this end, joint initiatives aimed at the improved implementation of multilateral instruments and regimes as well as of UNGA commitments will be considered.

Ministers emphasized that dialogue and cooperation among cultures and civilizations is one of the effective means to enhance knowledge, understanding and tolerance and to avoid misunderstanding and conflicts among different nations and countries. In this context, they called for respect for and promotion of cultural diversity to secure an all-round development of international relations.

Ministers stressed their support for the multilateral system of collective security, based on the United Nations, and reiterated that the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security rests with the United Nations Security Council, in accordance with the UN Charter. Ministers underlined that ASEM countries are committed to the process of reform of the United Nations system. Ministers also underlined their support for the work of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change.

Ministers underlined the importance of mutual trust and cooperation to promote peace and security both at regional and international level. Ministers noted the European Security Strategy adopted by the European Council in December 2003, as well as recent developments in ARF and ASEAN, which has agreed to an ASEAN Security Community component in its Bali Concord II to promote peace and stability.

Ministers also stressed the role regional organisations and dialogue mechanisms such as ASEM can play in enhancing multilateralism. Ministers agreed that the ASEM coordination among ASEM Permanent Representations to the UN in New York could be reinforced.

In particular, Ministers also agreed to:

- Coordinate efforts to strengthen the role of the United Nations in conflict prevention and crisis management;
- Promote with regard to non-proliferation efforts towards universal adherence, full implementation and, where necessary, strengthening of international treaties and agreements to support their effective and global implementation, as well as the role of international organisations such as IAEA and OPCW;
- With regard to combating terrorism and transnational organized crime, strongly support the co-ordinating role of the UN both in ensuring and assisting full implementations of the UNSCR 1373 and in strengthening further the international legal framework;
- Promote respect for human rights and improve the functioning of multilateral institutions, such as the UN Commission on Human Rights;
- Strengthen the role of the WTO and to ensure a successful outcome, acceptable to all, of the negotiations launched in Doha;
- Work together to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, especially through coordination and cooperation through the multilateral institutions;

Ministers touched upon the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court, and noted that dialogue within ASEM should continue on this issue.

Ministers underlined the need to ensure increased coordination on multilateral issues to be pursued across all ASEM pillars, building in particular on work undertaken by trade, environment, health and culture Ministers. Ministers requested ASEM SOM to review existing ASEM procedures regarding coordination on multilateral issues, in particular with regard to UN affairs, and to make proposals to strengthen ASEM coordination where appropriate in the multilateral framework.

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