

**THE SIXTH ASEM FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING**

**KILDARE, IRELAND, 17-18 APRIL 2004**

**CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT**

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### **CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT**

The Sixth ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting (ASEM FMM 6) was held in Kildare, Ireland from 17-18 April 2004. It was attended by Ministers from ten Asian and fifteen European states and the Commissioner for External Relations of the European Commission. The meeting was chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ireland, Mr Brian Cowen TD.

The Ministers held comprehensive and fruitful discussions on a wide range of issues of common interest, guided by the principles of the ASEM Summits, as outlined in the Asia-Europe Cooperation Framework of 2000 (AECF 2000).

Under the overarching theme "how can we sustain an international order based on effective multilateralism?" the Ministers exchanged views on the following issues: Terrorism, Conflict Prevention, the Central Role of the United Nations, Korean Peninsula, Afghanistan, Iraq, the Middle East Peace Process and Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. They also discussed the effects of globalisation in its different forms, the negotiations taking place in the framework of the World Trade Organization, the need to ensure sustainable global development, the Dialogue between Cultures and Civilizations, and international public health, and in particular agreed as follows:

#### **Multilateralism**

Ministers discussed how to maintain an international order based on enhanced multilateralism. Ministers agreed on the need for a strong United Nations system, in order to deal effectively with threats and challenges. Ministers agreed on a separate ASEM Declaration on Multilateralism (see annex).

#### **Non-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction**

Ministers recalled the ASEM Political Declaration on Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction and Their Means of Delivery agreed at the last ASEM FMM 5 in Bali. Ministers reaffirmed that proliferation of WMD is a major international threat, which requires an appropriate and resolute response by the international community. Ministers agreed that multilateral instruments, export controls and international cooperation should be promoted. Ministers agreed that export control should not hamper cooperation and assistance in material, equipment and technologies for peaceful purposes. They expressed their support for an enhanced role of the United Nations in this field, and underlined the need to implement concrete measures aimed at preventing proliferation of WMD.

## **Terrorism**

Ministers stressed that terrorism in all its forms remains a serious threat to global stability. They unanimously condemned the recent bombings and loss of life in Madrid, as well as recent terrorist attacks elsewhere. They discussed and took note of the European Union's recently adopted measures aimed at reinforcing its overall strategy to combat terrorism and increasing anti-terrorism cooperation. They welcomed the reaffirmation by the EU of its intention to ensure effective and practical cooperation with third countries in combating terrorism.

Ministers noted that terrorism will only be defeated by solidarity and collective action, and pledged to do everything within their means and capacity to combat terrorism in all its forms including in addressing urgently the root causes of terrorism. Ministers stressed the key role of the United Nations and agreed to work to ensure universal adherence to, and full implementation of, all UN Security Council Resolutions, UN Conventions on Terrorism and related protocols. Ministers acknowledged that all actions in combating terrorism must be undertaken in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the obligations set out under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001).

Ministers agreed on the need to pursue and intensify regional cooperation, in particular in the following key areas:

- Reducing the access of terrorists to financial and other economic resources;
- Protecting the security of international transport and ensure effective systems of border control;
- Addressing the factors which contribute to support for, and recruitment into, terrorism;
- Strengthening capacity building of law enforcement agencies.

Ministers welcomed and endorsed the results of the ASEM seminar on anti-terrorism held at Beijing in September 2003. Ministers look forward to the next such seminar to be held in Germany in October 2004.

Ministers agreed that strong action must continue to be taken on the sources of financing of terrorist organisations, while respecting the rule of law, and called for a continued dialogue within ASEM on this crucial issue in order to step up the fight against the financing of terrorism. Ministers welcomed the outcome of the ASEM seminar on the fight against money laundering held in Germany, from 30-31 October 2003. Ministers reaffirmed their support to the ASEM anti-money laundering project.

Ministers commended recent regional initiatives, in particular in the framework of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and ASEAN plus 3, as well as the outcome of the Regional Ministerial Meeting on Counter-Terrorism held in Bali in February 2004.

Ministers stressed the need for all counter-terrorist measures to be conducted in a framework based on the principles of the UN Charter and international law, including

respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Ministers welcomed all the cooperation among ASEM members in the field of counter-terrorism.

### **Korean Peninsula**

Ministers welcomed the positive outcome of the second round of the Six-Party Talks, and supported the efforts of the Parties to hold the third round of the Six-Party Talks by the end of June, as well as setting up a working group in preparation for the plenary meeting, expressing their hope that the next round of talks would yield further substantive progress.

Ministers reaffirmed their support for the commitment made by the parties concerned to a nuclear-weapon-free Korean Peninsula, and to resolving the nuclear issue peacefully through dialogue, in a spirit of mutual respect and consultation on an equal basis, so as to maintain peace and stability on Korean Peninsula and the region at large. They encouraged the parties to continue to take coordinated steps to address the nuclear issue and address all the related concerns. ASEM ministers reconfirmed their willingness to contribute to this process in an appropriate manner.

Ministers noted with satisfaction the progress in dialogue and cooperation between the ROK and the DPRK, and confirmed their support for further dialogue and cooperation between ROK and the DPRK.

### **Iraq**

ASEM Foreign Ministers expressed their support for the earliest possible return of sovereignty to the Iraqi people. They discussed the deteriorating security situation in Iraq and deplored the upsurge of violence. They noted that such violence was hindering the orderly transfer of sovereignty to inclusive Iraqi institutions. Ministers expressed their deep concern at the human suffering that is taking place, including through the loss of civilian life and taking of hostages. Ministers called on those responsible to release all remaining hostages immediately, and without harm, and to desist from any further such activity. They called on all sides to make every effort to avoid civilian casualties and damage to property, particularly religious and cultural sites. They stressed the need for the full respect of international human rights and humanitarian law in Iraq.

Ministers underlined the importance of the political process for the restoration of the sovereignty in Iraq, involving all parties in an inclusive way. In this context, Ministers welcomed the visits of UNSG Special Envoy, Lakhdar Brahimi, to Iraq and strongly endorsed a more direct and central UN role in the political transition process, in particular in the handover of power to an Interim Government on June 30 and the holding of elections to a National Assembly before the end of January 2005.

Ministers also emphasized the importance of international co-operation to support the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Iraq.

## **Middle East Peace Process**

Ministers considered developments in the Middle East Peace Process. They stressed their commitment to a negotiated two-State solution agreed between the parties which would result in a viable, contiguous, sovereign and independent Palestinian State existing side by side in peace with an Israel living within recognised and secure borders. They agreed that the Quartet Roadmap represents the only route to achieving such an outcome.

Ministers emphasized that final status issues including borders and the problem of refugees must be resolved through negotiations between the parties in accordance with Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and must not be prejudged.

Ministers called on both sides to resume negotiations on the peace process without further delay.

Ministers expressed concern at the ongoing cycle of retaliatory violence. They condemned yesterday's assassination of Hamas leader Abdel-Aziz al-Rantissi by Israeli forces and the suicide bombing earlier in the day. They called for an immediate end to such violence and reminded the Israeli government that extra judicial killings are contrary to intentional law. Ministers invited both parties to refrain from any further violent action.

Ministers pointed to the urgent and on-going need to address the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, and stressed the continuing readiness of ASEM partners to contribute in this regard.

## **WTO-Doha Development Agenda**

Ministers noted with satisfaction that progress is being achieved in the Doha negotiations now ongoing in Geneva. They stressed the need for WTO members to approach the negotiations in a positive spirit with a view to achieving a fair and balanced outcome.

## **Sustainable Development**

Ministers agreed that achieving sustainable development for the benefit of the global community as a whole is an area where there is considerable scope for dialogue and cooperation between the EU and Asia. The role of members of ASEM as major donors of the development assistance, coupled with their experience in harnessing the benefits of regional integration in order to promote trade and economic cooperation, should be used to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, in particular for the benefit of the poorest and least developed countries.

## **Dialogue of Cultures and Civilisations**

Ministers agreed that the Dialogue on Cultures and Civilisations is an essential part of international peace and stability. Ministers welcomed the Beijing Conference on Cultures and Civilisation held in December 2003, and reaffirmed guidelines adopted at the conference. Ministers also welcomed the offer by France to host the next ASEM Conference on Cultures and Civilizations in 2005 a preparatory meeting to be organised by Malaysia in 2004. Ministers welcomed the progress at UNESCO in preparing the first draft of the International Convention on Cultural Diversity.

Ministers noted the successful initiatives undertaken by ASEM members in pursuit of the Dialogue, and agreed also that more action is needed to foster greater inter-cultural understanding. Inter-cultural dialogue, including that organised within the framework of the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), could contribute to a climate of dialogue and increased mutual understanding. Initiatives should be considered, targeting, for example, selected academic multipliers, think-tanks, and religious leaders who are deemed to be able to influence public opinion in ASEM countries. Ministers also agreed to encourage all partners to contribute to a climate of inter-faith interaction.

Ministers agreed in particular on the need to reinforce Asia-Europe higher education cooperation and exchanges and welcomed the results and follow-up actions of the ASEM Symposium on Educational Exchange held in Tsukuba, Japan in November, 2003. Ministers expressed the satisfaction with the achievements of the ASEM DUO Fellowship Programme and called upon more ASEM partners to contribute to this programme.

### **Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)**

Ministers took note of the ongoing consultant study (funded by the European Commission) being provided to the Board of Governors of ASEF and to ASEM Senior Officials to suggest more options and scenarios for ASEF's future strategy and long term financial sustainability. In the light of all the available data, including this study, Ministers requested the Board of Governors of ASEF to submit proposals on the future of ASEF to ASEM Senior Officials for consideration and approval prior to submission to the Hanoi Summit.

### **International Public Health**

Ministers reaffirmed their resolve to continue their efforts to combat infectious diseases like HIV/Aids, SARS and avian influenza, Ministers recognised the importance of closer cooperation among governments, communities and businesses in order to effectively contain the outbreak of diseases and future similar threats.

Ministers acknowledged the threat posed by international epidemics to public health, economics and national security. Ministers welcomed cooperation aimed at controlling international epidemics, especially ASEM seminar on the Management of Public Health Emergencies, and tasked ASEM SOM and coordinators to define concrete initiatives in this regard, including an expert meeting on controlling international epidemics. In particular, Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the

implementation of the Declaration of Commitment issue at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/Aids.

## **Migration**

Ministers acknowledged the need to strengthen cooperation on issues concerning migration, to deal with the threats posed to human life and human dignity through trafficking in persons and other forms of illegal migration, the need to examine the root causes of such migration and to ensure the successful integration of legal migrants into their host societies

## **Enlargement of ASEM**

Ministers had an in-depth discussion on the issue of ASEM enlargement and concluded that progress was achieved. They tasked the SOM to monitor developments and report back in due course.

## **Myanmar**

Ministers welcomed the Government of Myanmar's decision to hold the National Convention on 17 May as a positive development for the national reconciliation process. They pledged continued support for efforts to assist in the process of democratisation and national reconciliation by the UNSG's Special Envoy, Mr Razali Ismail. Ministers took note of the report on 26 March 2004 of Mr. Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar, to the UN Commission on Human Rights, and welcomed his confirmation that the authorities have now agreed in principle to his next visit.

Ministers noted the participation of the Government of Myanmar in the Bangkok Process. Ministers looked forward to the early lifting of remaining restrictions placed on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD. Ministers noted that the members of ASEM stand ready to assist the government, in its efforts to bring about national reconciliation, including through humanitarian assistance, and also to do their part to respond to specific advances made under the Roadmap to democracy and national reconciliation.

## **Future of ASEM**

Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the ASEM Process as a unique vehicle for dialogue and cooperation between Europe and Asia. Partners agreed that the high level of participants is a key characteristic of the dialogue and cooperation taking place within ASEM. In this respect, agendas focused on a few key international and global issues of mutual interests are essential in order to ensure a better coordination among partners.

Ministers took note of the deliberations of the informal brainstorming SOM that took place in Rome from 13-14 November 2003 and the conclusions of the SOM of 16 April and reached an agreement on the SOM's proposals for reform of the management of ASEM. The aim of the reform is to ensure that the process remains focused and is supported by improved information flows. Ministers endorsed the SOMs' proposals as regards: ASEM Working Methods, the Concept Paper on the ASEM Infoboard, and the Guidelines for the Use of the ASEM Logo (attached annexes). Ministers tasked Senior Officials to start practical implementation of these proposals.

### **Task Force for Closer Economic Partnership between Asia and Europe**

Ministers took note with interest of the ongoing work of the Task Force for Closer Economic Partnership between Asia and Europe. Ministers looked forward to receiving the Task Force's proposals, including on how Europe could cooperate on the deepening and reinforcing of the Asian bond markets. Ministers requested the Task Force to provide briefings on the status of their work for consideration by the ASEM Finance Ministers' Meeting (Brussels, 6 July 2004) and the ASEM Economic Ministers' Meeting (Rotterdam, 16-17 September), so that ASEM partners might study possible measures and proposals, as appropriate, to follow up on the final report to be presented to the ASEM 5 Summit.

### **Recommendations of ASEM Senior Officials' Meeting, 16-17 April 2004**

The Ministers endorsed the following recommendations submitted by the Senior Officials Meeting in Kildare on 16 April 2004:

- ASEM Symposium on an Iron-Silk Road, Seoul, South Korea, 17-18 June 2004; and,
- ASEM Workshop on Urban Forestry, Suzhou, China, October 2004.

As regards the new initiatives still in the pipeline, Ministers took note of the updated information on:

- ASEM Ocean Initiative of the Philippines; and,
- ASEM Workshop on EU/Asia S&T Co-operation on Clean Technologies, Hanoi, Vietnam, 22-24 September 2004.

Ministers took note of the Chair Statements of the Ministerial Meetings held since the last Foreign Ministers' Meeting (FMM 5) in Bali, Indonesia, (22-24 July 2003), namely the Environment Ministers' Meeting (Lecce, Italy, 12-13 October 2003) and the ASEM Conference on Cultures and Civilisations (Beijing, 3-4 December 2003). Ministers also took note of the Chairman's statement issued following the ASEM High Level Conference on Agricultural Cooperation, (Beijing, 12 November 2003). Ministers agreed that these meetings show the value of ASEM in addressing global challenges at a multilateral level in appropriate sectors, in the present case, in the areas of environmental, agricultural and cultural cooperation.



## **ASEM 5 Summit in Hanoi**

Ministers took note with satisfaction of the preparations for the ASEM 5 Summit in Hanoi on 8-9 October 2004, including a proposed indicative list of topics and their proposed declaration on a 'Closer ASEM Economic Partnership'. The Ministers had an exchange of views and fully agreed on 'Further Revitalising and Substantiating the Asia-Europe Partnership' as the overarching theme for the ASEM 5 Summit. They strongly believed that the Summit would provide further dynamism for ASEM's endeavours to effectively contribute to multilateral efforts in developing international relations based on equality, equity and mutual interest, to elevate ASEM economic synergy to a higher level commensurate with the two regions' potential and to consolidate unity in cultural diversity. Ministers underlined the importance of the full attendance of Leaders to the Summit as it reflects high commitment of the partners to ASEM cooperation. Ministers agreed an ASEM SOM be convened in Hanoi in September to prepare for the Summit.

## **The Seventh Foreign Ministers' Meeting**

Ministers welcomed the offer of Japan to host the Seventh ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Kyoto, Japan in May 2005.

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18 April 2004.

### Annexes:

- ASEM Declaration on Multilateralism
- ASEM Working Methods.
- Concept Paper on the ASEM Infoboard.
- Guidelines for the Use of the ASEM Logo.