

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

ASEM Conference on Cultures and Civilizations
December 4, 2003, Beijing

The ASEM Conference on Cultures and Civilizations was held in Beijing, China from December 3 to 4, 2003, aiming at common progress based on cultural diversity, and was attended by Ministers in charge of culture or relevant portfolios from the 26 partners and eminent members from civil societies of ASEM countries. After extensive discussions, the following consensus was reached:

The Ministers noted 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. The Ministers also observed that progress in science and technology and growth of economic globalization have brought about both opportunities and challenges to the world peace and development. On one hand, the world has become more open, more inter-linked and more integrated at least by means of communications. On the other hand, the world is far from tranquil and mankind is facing many grim challenges including terrorism. Conflicts arise time and again from perceived ethnic and religious contradictions, racism, xenophobia and intolerance. This has attracted worldwide concern since the end of the Cold War.

It is in this context that the Ministers welcome the opportunity to meet on this important topic in Beijing. They observed that cultural diversity is a fundamental feature of world cultures and a form of manifestation of world civilizations. The ASEM family is home to some of the world's oldest and richest civilizations. ASEM can and should make a contribution to the promotion of dialogue, understanding and mutual respect among different cultures and civilizations of the world.

The Ministers noted that sound and sustained cultural ties secure an all-round development of international relations. Dialogue between cultures and civilizations as rich and diverse as those of Europe and Asia has created a platform for transcending a model of globalization that seeks to impose uniformity, and for the definition of responses to the diversity of situations and complexity of the international situation, in a spirit of mutual respect, without loss of identity and by means of complementary approaches.

Geographic convenience and long-standing interaction have laid a favourable foundation for enhanced cultural exchange and cooperation among ASEM partners. Fortified by their long history of ordeals, positive

experiences, contributions and mutual enrichment, Europe and Asia consider cultural diversity to be a true source of innovation, inspiration and progress for human society. Openness to other cultures is a source of strength and may be seen as a driving force behind the development of civilizations. Respect for and the promotion of cultural diversity, together with dialogue among civilizations, have imparted fresh impetus to the all-round development of relations between Asia and Europe.

The Ministers also took note of the growing degrees and instances of regional integration happening throughout the world, especially in Europe, through the European Union, and in Asia, primarily through ASEAN and ASEAN + 3. Cultural diversity does not necessarily hinder integration but can be the source of richness and strength, as exemplified by ASEAN and EU. The Ministers considered ASEM to be a useful forum for Asia and Europe to exchange ideas and experiences on how to respect and promote cultural diversity, while pursuing processes of regional integration and community-building.

Based on the above consensus, the Ministers discussed the following topics with a view to realizing common progress based on cultural diversity by promoting better knowledge and understanding of the rich nature of these cultures:

1. The desire to promote cultural diversity and exchange on cultural policies in the context of globalization that would lead to a deeper insight into the challenges confronting national cultures, as well as into the opportunities now available to States and societies to nurture dialogue among different cultures;
2. The importance to preserve and promote both traditional and contemporary forms of arts and culture, to preserve and promote tangible and intangible cultural heritage, to implement programmes on shared heritage of Asia and Europe, and to exchange best practices that support the various areas of culture and cultural industries (publishing, cinema and audiovisual and music industries) and focus on the conditions of cultural industries;
3. The importance of educational exchanges, of mobility of artists and other cultural professionals, and of meetings and expert missions.

The following policy directions for future co-operation were adopted:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The need to expand and intensify the work of ASEM in the field of cultural and educational exchanges (e.g. the ASEMUS and the DUO programs). In this regard, the Ministers appreciated the substantial contributions that have been made by the Asia-Europe |
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Foundation (ASEF) in promoting intercultural dialogue, mutual awareness, and understanding between Asia and Europe through its comprehensive programmes in the field of intellectual, cultural and people-to-people exchanges. The Ministers encouraged ASEF to further intensify its work in these areas, in accordance with the pluriannual action plans that it has already formulated.

2. Other relevant instruments for international cooperation could be involved, such as UNESCO's comprehensive instruments for international cooperation - i.e. in the fields of education, culture, information technology and dissemination of information. They welcome the initiative taken by UNESCO to elaborate a convention on cultural diversity.
3. A clear determination was expressed to pursue the dialogue begun here on ways to foster the conditions for vigorous, contemporary creativity, and consequently, appropriate public policies and measures in favor of cultural diversity. The Ministers invite the ASEM foreign Ministers to take account of, as appropriate, cultural diversity in their policy deliberation in their next meeting in Dublin.
4. The importance to imbibe the values of mutual respect and appreciation of different cultures in our youths in schools and universities by exposing them early to the diversity and richness of different cultures.

The follow-up actions adopted include:

1. Continue to enhance the awareness that political, economic and cultural exchanges and cooperation are three intertwining pillars of the ASEM cooperation;
2. Encourage exchange activities between young people from Asian and European countries;
3. Encourage the organization and mutual participation of cultural and arts festivals so as to promote mutual cultural recognition;
4. Encourage media cooperation so as to facilitate the promotion of cultural diversity and mutual understanding;
5. France offers to host the next ASEM Conference on Cultures and Civilization;
6. The Chairman's Statement will be submitted to UNESCO.

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Head of Delegations

Japan: Mr. Yamoto Inaba, Senior Vice Minister, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

Host Country

China: Mr. Sun Jiazheng, Minister of Culture

Co-sponsors

Denmark: Mr. Brian Arthur Mikkelsen, Minister of Culture

France: Mr. Jean-Jacques Aillagon, Minister of Culture and Communication

Indonesia: Mr. Gede Ardhika, Minister of Culture and Tourism

Malaysia: Dr. Rais Yatim, Minister at the Prime Minister's Department

Singapore: Mr. Lee Boon Yang, Minister of Information, Communications and the Arts