



ASIA-EUROPE MEETING

## Chair's Summary

### The ASEM Seminar on Adaptation to Climate Change

October 2-3, 2008, Tokyo, Japan

The 6<sup>th</sup> ASEM Summit held in Helsinki in September 2006, resulted in the adoption of a Declaration on Climate Change which recognizes that "ASEM partners have a crucial role in shaping and forging long-term policies as well as immediate actions for mitigation and adaptation measures" and calls for "the development of possible cooperation and activities among ASEM partners in support of the implementation of declaration". As a contribution towards fulfilling this objective, and responding to the desire for closer cooperation among ASEM partners in meeting global environmental challenges expressed by ASEM environment ministers at their meeting in Copenhagen in April 2007, "ASEM Seminar on Adaptation to Climate Change" was held on 2 - 3 October 2008, in Tokyo. The seminar was co-chaired by Japan and the European Commission (EC), and co-sponsored by Netherlands, UK, Viet Nam and the Republic of Korea.

The seminar, aiming to deepen understanding on climate change impacts and approaches to adaptation through sharing experiences and thus to enhance capacity of each ASEM member country, was attended by more than hundred experts and officials from ASEM members and Intensive discussions were held in five sectors as follows: water resources, health, agriculture, disaster risk reduction and biodiversity. The Seminar highlighted the serious necessity for the international community to attach as much importance to the adaptation issues as it does to the mitigation issues. The Seminar also noted that the adaptation issues may provide both challenges and opportunities, that the adaptation challenges are oftentimes driven by the climate change and other factors and that some extreme cases of adaptation, in effect, have raised public and political awareness to the seriousness of the issues.

In the opening remarks, Mr. Nobuhide Minorikawa, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan highlighted the importance of international cooperation through such efforts as "Cool Earth Partnership," the necessity of mainstreaming the adaptation issue in development policy, the effectiveness of scientific knowledge to underpin adaptation policies and measures. Mr. Ladislav Miko, Director for Protecting the Natural Environment of the EC Directorate-General for Environment, also underscored that in order to be effective, policy-makers need to integrate consideration of climate change impacts into planning of development. At the international level, he recalled that it was vital to integrate adaptation into development cooperation agenda so as to prevent years of development efforts from being wiped out.

#### 1. Water resources

Presentations were made on the expected impacts of climate change on water management (precipitation, runoff, sea level rise). Despite uncertainties about the impacts, it is essential to start accommodating current water management practices to climate change. Examples of adaptation were presented from the Netherland, Japan and Indonesia. The importance of integrated water resource management approach was emphasized; structural defense measures (coastal defense, river flooding defense) in combination with spatial planning measures, desalinating sea water and effective transfer of water are examples of supply side measures; as for the demand side measures, recycling water and increasing water efficiency to reduce water demand were mentioned. Participants pointed that it was necessary to focus not only on infrastructure aspects but also on policies and practices of water resources management while respecting cultural values and maintaining traditional practices. It was observed that developed countries, regions and cities that are vulnerable to the effect of climate change are taking adaptive measures. It was emphasized that vulnerable developing countries also need to include adaptation to climate change into their development policies and planning; the importance of external assistance in capacity building and implementation to vulnerable developing countries to be able to adapt to climate change was recommended.

## 2. Health

Participants noted the risks on health due to climate change, such as altered distribution of certain vectors, increased risk of heat wave death etc. They shared the view that mainstreaming of health issue into adaptation to climate change was important and that strengthening of the public health system, including through raising public awareness, appropriate surveillance, could be the key to deal with this issue. As an example, a practice of a local government to avoid heat stroke (such as e-mail to cell phone or radio warning etc.) was presented. It was noted that some measures for promoting health in the efforts of adaptation to climate change were beneficial also for greenhouse gas emissions reduction (co-benefits) and should be encouraged.

## 3. Agriculture

Following to presentations on a research outcome regarding the perspective of influence of climate change on cereal production in China, and on a case study at local level, experts discussed positive and negative impacts of temperature rise and higher CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations (CO<sub>2</sub> fertilization effects) on crop yield as well as uncertainty of prediction due to lack of information.

They noted the necessity to deal with the negative impacts through integrated approach while making the most of new technologies, adjusting land use policy and raising awareness at local level. In order to do so, seminar participants recognized the importance of wide stakeholder involvement, information gathering and close consultations with local people and within governmental sectors. The discussion was also held from the point of view of development financing, following the presentation on a development bank's perspective regarding adaptation. It was highlighted that adaptation project formulation requires not only the analysis on global climate change and local climate condition, but also appropriate risk assessment.

## 4. Disaster risk reduction

Participants noted that reducing water disaster impacts is one of the core activities of adaptation to climate change and that it is necessary to further develop strategy to integrate concerns on water disaster and climate change effects. Some examples of countries with long experiences of combating to water disaster were presented and the participants exchanged their opinions on measures against flooding, tropical cyclones and storm surges. In this regard, participants reaffirmed the importance of information gathering, prioritization of policies based on risk assessment, awareness raising, participatory consultations, infrastructure construction and development and transfer of new technology. Discussion was held on the balance between "hard approach" based largely on structural measures and "soft approach" relying more on adaptive water management. It was emphasized that integrating normality and exceptionality in risk chain is important. Participants also exchanged their views on the possibility of reformulating land use options for better prevention of natural disaster. They shared information on the system of insurance against natural disaster in developing country.

## 5. Biodiversity

Participants shared the view that conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and related ecosystem services will contribute to mitigation to climate change and serve as efficient tool for climate change adaptation at local and regional level. In this regard, the necessity of creating green infrastructure for adaptation to climate change was emphasized. Some programs for conservation of biodiversity in Asia and in Europe were presented. It was pointed that ecosystem conservation should be linked with wide range of issues such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries and energy policies and other economic development policies. The necessity of further collecting scientific data in order to implement effective protection of biodiversity as well as the importance of education and raising awareness on this issue were also emphasized.

Participants decided that the results of this seminar be reported to the 7<sup>th</sup> ASEM Summit on 24 – 25 October in Beijing, and that various experiences, actions and policies presented at this seminar would be taken into consideration by the all ASEM members in designing their individual adaptation policies and climate change in general. Participants also expressed their wish that the outcome of this seminar would be reported to coming events such as the COP 14 and the 5th World Water Forum. They shared the views that the seminar has been helpful in revealing that the countries and regions in two markedly different continents – Asia and Europe – faced similar challenges to adapt to the consequences of climate change. They reached common recognition that Asia and Europe should continue to learn from each other and to take cooperative actions in the design and implementation of climate change adaptation policies and measures.