

ASEM Symposium on Multilateral and Regional Economic Relations (Summary)

1. The Japanese Foreign Ministry hosted the “ASEM Symposium on Multilateral and Regional Economic Relations ~What would the Asia-Europe relations in the 21st century be like?~” in Tokyo on 25th March 2003.
2. The symposium was held based on the initiative which Japan proposed together with Germany and Singapore at the fourth Asia-Europe Summit Meeting held last September in Copenhagen, and was attended by government officials from more than 20 states of ASEM partners and experts on international economic issues from business and academic circles. The Symposium was held with a view to considering how best closer economic ties between Asia and Europe would benefit the two regions and the global economy as a whole, against the backdrop of the dramatic trend the world is now facing. In the world economy of today, multilateral (WTO), regional/bilateral (EU, ASEAN, FTAs/EPAs) and inter-regional (ASEM, APEC) developments are proceeding simultaneously. The Doha Development Agenda was agreed at the WTO Ministerial Conference in November 2001, which launched a new round of multilateral trade negotiations covering a broad range of issues. Europe has been advancing the historic process of integration with the expansion of EU membership, and Asia has witnessed new developments such as FTAs/EPAs. Deepening Asia-Europe dialogue on inter-regional cooperation in this multi-layered world economy at this timing would not only help countries of Asia and Europe to make the WTO new round a fruitful one, but would push forward Asia-Europe cooperation in medium- to long-term.
3. The symposium was chaired by Pro. Toshiro Tanaka, permanent governor of Keio University and President of Japan Association of EU Studies. The moderators of each session were Dr. Guido Peruzzo, Deputy Director General of Foreign Economic Policy Bureau, Federal Ministry of Economics and Labor, Germany, Pro. Pang Eng Fong, Professor of Singapore Management University, and Mr. Kenichiro Sasae, Director-General of the Economic Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan. At the opening session, Mr. Eisuke Hinode, Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Japan, made an opening remark and keynote speech, and Dr. Michael Reiterer, Minister of the Delegation of the European Commission in Japan delivered a speech as a guest speaker. About 120 audiences including government officials, academics, businesspeople and others attended the symposium.

4. This symposium consisted of three sessions: “The Contribution of ASEM to the advancement of the WTO new round”, “Lessons from EU integration for closer economic partnership in Asia” and “Asia-Europe cooperation with a view beyond the WTO new round”. At the end of the symposium the Chair, Pro.Toshiro Tanaka, made a conclusive remark as follows:

In regards to the WTO new round negotiation, it is not realistic for ASEM to achieve a common position. Rather, the most important task for ASEM is “confidence building”. Europe, in its process of integration, established 1) a society without war and 2) a society where conflicts are solved by rules. This experience would be a lesson which Asia should learn from. ASEM is characterized by its flexibility and informality. It is significant for Asia and Europe to share information and build confidence through opportunities such as this symposium.

5. This symposium was live broadcasted through Internet.