

Declaration of the Fifth Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting

Beijing, 18-20 June 2008

1. The Fifth Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting (ASEP V) was held in Beijing, China on 18-20 June 2008. Parliamentarians from ASEM partners and the European Parliament attended the Meeting at the invitation of His Excellency Mr. Wu Bangguo, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China. This was the first ASEP meeting after the second round of ASEM enlargement that increased ASEP membership to 43 (See list of delegates in Annex).

2. Chairman Wu Bangguo inaugurated the Meeting and extended a warm welcome to all delegates. He pointed out in his welcoming remarks that to strengthen Asia-Europe cooperation and promote common development is an issue of mutual interest to people of all countries in Asia and Europe. Dialogue and cooperation between Asia and Europe is in the fundamental interest of the two sides and conducive to peace, development and cooperation of the whole world.

3. The Meeting welcomed new members, namely the parliaments of Bulgaria, India, Mongolia, Pakistan, and Romania, believing that their participation will make ASEP more representative and dynamic.

4. ASEP parliamentarians expressed deep sympathies over the casualties and property losses incurred in the recent natural disasters in Myanmar, China and Japan, and extended condolences to the bereaved. They expressed the hope that life in the affected areas will be brought back to normal at an early date.

5. ASEP parliamentarians expressed their commitment to peace, stability and prosperity in their respective regions. They expressed their full support for the efforts for political stabilization in the Western Balkans and for the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.

6. ASEP parliamentarians recalled the previous four Meetings in Strasbourg (1996), Manila (2002), Hue City (2004) and Helsinki (2006), and held comprehensive, in-depth and fruitful discussions on issues of common concern and interest.

Promoting the Doha Round of WTO Negotiations and facilitate trade and investment between Asia and Europe

7. ASEP parliamentarians reaffirmed the importance of an open, rule-based, multilateral trading system under the WTO to global trade balance and economic growth and financial stability of all countries and regions, believing that such a system will be the most effective in regulating and expanding trade relations among ASEM partners.

8. ASEP parliamentarians voiced concern over the slow progress in the multilateral trade negotiations and surging trade protectionism and expressed the view that this would have an adverse impact on the trade environment of the world, developing members in particular. They undertook to ask their governments to advance the Doha Round of

negotiations to a comprehensive, balanced and early conclusion, preferably within this year, to ensure the realization of the development goals of the Doha Development Agenda for the real benefits of all members, especially developing members.

9. ASEP parliamentarians recognized that ensuring food security for their population is a primary duty for all countries, and noted that agriculture is one of the key issues in the Doha Round of negotiations, called on all members to demonstrate greater sincerity and flexibility to enable substantial progress in agricultural negotiations as well as in other related areas at the earliest possible date.

10. ASEP parliamentarians noted with concern the growing inflationary pressure on countries from the rising global food prices and their severe impact on the life of the poor population and the global poverty-reduction objective, recommended that their respective countries, developed ones in particular, take measures under the guidance and coordination of the United Nations to increase aid in the short-term and promote sustainable development of agricultural production and strengthen capacity-building that contributes to the improvement of agricultural productivity to raise food self-sufficiency in the medium and long-term, so as to bring about a fundamental solution to the issue of food security.

11. Believing that regional trade arrangements/free trade agreements are useful supplements to the multilateral trading system advocated by the WTO, ASEP parliamentarians supported regional cooperation carried out by ASEM partners in compliance with the WTO rules to promote cross-regional economic opening up and integration.

12. Reiterating that ASEM partners should work together to deepen the Asia-Europe economic partnership through closer cooperation and take concrete actions to reduce trade and investment barriers to facilitate trade opening up and mutual investment between Asia and Europe, ASEP parliamentarians called on all ASEM partners to regularly review the implementation of the *Hanoi Declaration on Closer ASEM Economic Partnership*.

13. Noting that the *ASEM Investment Promotion Action Plan (IPAP)* is aimed at promoting two-way flow of investment between Asia and Europe, ASEP parliamentarians expressed concern over the lack of substantial progress of ASEM in investment promotion in recent years, and urged ASEM partners to continue to encourage their investment institutions to deepen multilateral exchanges, information sharing and cooperation and explore the possibility of establishing a multilateral investment promotion mechanism under the guidance of the Action Plan. In this context and in view of the constraints of climate change, the ASEP parliamentarians drew particular attention to the need of increased investments in technologies designed to enhance environmental protection and energy efficiency and transfer of those technologies.

14. ASEP parliamentarians recognized the strong impetus European trade integration has given to the economic integration and overall growth of the region and welcomed the regional trade arrangements/free trade agreements that have been reached or are under negotiation in Asia. They also called for more in-depth studies on measures to promote

Asia-Europe trade, including the establishment of an Asia-Europe free trade area.

15. Noting that this year is the year for mid-term review of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and that the United Nations will hold an MDGs high-level event in September, ASEP parliamentarians called on ASEM partners to seize the opportunity and work together for the worldwide fulfillment of the MDGs on schedule, particularly programmes directly related to poverty alleviation.

16. Agreeing that the international community should work to create an enabling external environment for the poverty-reduction and development endeavors of developing countries so that they can better meet the MDGs, ASEP parliamentarians urged developed countries to fulfill, as soon as possible, their commitment of increasing their ODA to 0.7% of their GNI.

17. Noting the exacerbated fluctuations in the international financial market and the expanded fallout of the subprime crisis, ASEP parliamentarians called on ASEM partners to increase dialogue and cooperation on financial policies to jointly safeguard stability of the regional financial market. They welcomed the active efforts of finance ministers of Asia and Europe to explore effective measures to deepen financial cooperation between the two regions, including continued implementation of the *Tianjin Initiative on Closer ASEM Economic and Financial Cooperation* and the establishment of an emergency dialogue mechanism to address economic and financial contingencies. ASEP parliamentarians applauded the efforts of Asian members in promoting financial and monetary integration, including the Chiang Mai Initiative, the Asian Bond Markets Initiative and the Asian Bond Fund.

18. ASEP parliamentarians welcomed active participation of the business communities in Asia and Europe in the ASEM process, reaffirmed the role of the Asia-Europe Business Forum as a bridge for closer contacts among the business communities of ASEM partners and a good platform for business-government interaction, and called on ASEM partners to implement more recommendations from the Business Forum.

19. ASEP parliamentarians reiterated the importance of closer cooperation on trade in services and among SMEs, and called on ASEM partners to implement the recommendations made at the inaugural ASEM SMEs Ministerial Meeting held in Beijing in October 2007 and work together to promote trade in services in Asia and Europe by encouraging dialogue, in the form of business fora and talks, between companies in the service sector and helping them find partners and business opportunities.

20. ASEP parliamentarians affirmed that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol are the major legitimate regime for international cooperation in addressing climate change and called on ASEM members to observe the provisions, principles and objectives of the convention, especially the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and make efforts to enable full, efficient and sustained implementation of the convention through long-term cooperation, now, up to and beyond 2012. ASEP parliamentarians recognized the scientific evidence of human activity influence on the current global warming trend and took note of the evidence that many natural systems are already affected by climate changes due to

carbon emissions from industries. ASEP parliamentarians also recognized that adverse climate change could impede the ability of countries to follow sustainable development and attain the Millennium Development Goals. ASEP parliamentarians encouraged ASEM countries to work closely in the preparation for the United Nations Climate Conference in 2009, in order for the Conference to produce concrete results.

21. ASEP parliamentarians also noted the increasing importance of energy security and sustainable development and the need for international cooperation in this sector. Energy policy should also, in the context of sustainable development, have a more prominent role in Asia-Europe cooperation. Energy will also have an important role in transport and logistics between Asia and Europe. This cooperation can be further strengthened by developing new land and sea links between Asia and Europe.

22. ASEP parliamentarians noted that one possible adverse effect of climate change can be an increased occurrence of natural disasters. Therefore, they agreed on the need for all countries to increase efforts in the area of disaster preparedness and expressed their support for further improving national disaster preparedness schemes. ASEP parliamentarians also underlined the usefulness of exchanging expertise in this area.

Protecting cultural diversity and promote dialogue among civilizations

23. ASEP parliamentarians recognized that globalization brings both growing opportunities for exchanges and interaction among different cultures, civilizations and religions and development imbalances and uneven distribution of benefits. Prejudice, misunderstanding, intolerance and even confrontation and conflict among different cultures and civilizations pose a challenge to human wisdom and civilization. It is all the more urgent to strengthen the political dimension of dialogue among cultures and civilizations.

24. ASEP parliamentarians reiterated their commitment to taking concerted actions and continuing to promote dialogue among cultures and civilizations, advance interaction and reconciliation of different religions, ethnic groups and ideologies, strengthen regional and international cooperation, and build a world of peace and harmony.

25. ASEP parliamentarians reiterated that ASEM partners include ancient cultures and civilizations in the East and the West, and that cultural diversity is a defining feature of this region and an important foundation for Asia-Europe cooperation and exchanges. They stressed the need to respect cultural diversity, and called for understanding, tolerance, mutual respect and harmonious co-existence among various social systems, development paths and cultures.

26. ASEP parliamentarians reaffirmed the positive role of dialogue among cultures and civilizations in eradicating poverty, protecting the environment and promoting sustainable economic growth and common prosperity, and called on ASEM partners to promote good governance and the rule of law, and in the spirit of inclusiveness and dialogue, work for a world featuring harmonious co-existence, equality, mutual respect and common development of different cultures and civilizations as well as promoting dialogue in practical daily life.

27. ASEP parliamentarians reiterated that they oppose extremism and are committed to

promoting peaceful and effective solutions of conflicts, preventing and combating all forms of terrorism, and opposing the use of force in the name of religion, faith and ideology and any attempt to provoke conflicts over differences in culture, race and value in Asia, Europe and other parts of the world.

28. ASEP parliamentarians took note of ASEM's efforts to promote dialogue among cultures and civilizations, and welcomed the positive outcome of the ASEM Conference on Cultures and Civilizations and the ASEM Interfaith Dialogue as well as the rich cultural exchanges sponsored by the Asia-Europe Foundation. They also hailed the role of NGOs and the civil society in deepening dialogue among cultures and civilizations.

29. ASEP parliamentarians emphasized the importance of education in promoting cultural exchanges and dialogue among civilizations, and called on ASEM partners to engage in educational cooperation and academic exchanges in a more active way and provide opportunities to people, youth in particular, to enable them to better appreciate and respect different cultures and civilizations as well as to understand that different cultures can enrich the civilization.

30. ASEP parliamentarians encouraged ASEM to redouble its efforts to develop an ambitious and concrete action plan on furthering exchange programmes for youth and young professionals, as called for by the ASEP IV meeting.

31. ASEP parliamentarians emphasized the important role of the media including internet in respecting cultural diversity and difference and promoting understanding and tolerance among cultures and civilizations and constructing relations of trust and friendship among countries and people and encouraged all ASEM partners to ensure openness and freedom of the media, according to national laws, and emphasized the principle of objectiveness and fairness in media reporting.

32. ASEP parliamentarians recalled the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, reaffirming their commitment to the purposes and principles contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. ASEP parliamentarians also called on ASEM partners to respect human rights and fundamental freedom for all, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion and others.

33. ASEP parliamentarians recognized the contribution made by relevant countries and regional and international organizations to promoting dialogue among cultures and civilizations, including the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations, the UNSG Alliance of Civilizations initiative, the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, and the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, and welcomed the implementation of these initiatives in the social, youth, education, media and other areas.

Further strengthening the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership

34. ASEP parliamentarians shared the view that the second decade for ASEM is an important period to deepen the ASEM process, and called on ASEM partners to further enhance dialogue and cooperation in political, economic, social and cultural areas, to enable people in Asia and Europe to benefit more from such cooperation. ASEP parliamentarians also supported measures taken by ASEM partners to raise the profile

and influence of ASEM and win broader public recognition and support.

35. ASEP parliamentarians stressed the need for closer links between ASEP and ASEM, and reiterated their readiness to contribute to the advancement of the ASEM process.

36. All delegates to ASEP V expressed their sincere appreciation to the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, host of the Meeting, and Chairman Wu Bangguo, President of the Meeting.

37. ASEP parliamentarians agreed to hold the 6th ASEP Meeting in 2010 in Belgium and looked forward to their reunion in two years' time.