Asia-Europe Meeting

# 13th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting

*20-21 Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar*



# Strengthening Partnership for Peace and Sustainable Development

(Chair's Statement)

1. The 13th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting (ASEM FMM13) was held in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar on 20-21 November 2017. The Meeting was hosted and chaired by Her Excellency Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. The Meeting was attended by Foreign Ministers/ High-level Representatives of 51 Asian and European countries, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Deputy Secretary-General for ASEAN Political-Security Community.

2. The Meeting, convened under the over-arching theme: ***"Strengthening Partnership for Peace and Sustainable Development",*** provided the opportunity for ASEM partners to exchange views on relevant issues of common interests and explored most effective and efficient ways to create a stronger partnership between Asia and Europe for a future of shared, inclusive and sustainable growth and prosperity. Ministers held fruitful discussions on a wide range of regional and international issues as well as global challenges.

**Partnership**

3. Ministers reaffirmed ASEM's cardinal values of equal partnership, mutual respect and mutual benefit. They emphasised the need for closer engagement towards a stronger and more dynamic partnership in the process of addressing global issues and the creation of a favourable environment for a stronger, more sustainable and balanced development. They underscored their firm commitment to promote and develop a stronger, more effective and fair international system with the United Nations at its core and effective multilateral institutions for cooperation**.**

4. Ministers recognised that Asia and Europe have strong, mutual interest in enhancing connectivity between the two regions to foster economic growth and bring countries, societies and people closer together. Commending the Senior Officials for the progress in the work of the APGC in reaching a definition of ASEM connectivity, they endorsed the work of the APGC, including on the definition of ASEM connectivity, scope of work and timeline (ANNEX I). They also tasked the APGC to continue its work in accordance with its TOR.

5. Ministers recognised the development of national, regional and global initiatives in Asia and Europe strengthening transport connectivity and facilitation such as the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025**,** the EU Infrastructure Investment Plan, the Eurasian Economic Union, Expanded Partnership for Quality Infrastructure, the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, and the Economic Corridor Programmes among ASEM partners.

6. Ministers welcomed the outcomes of the 4th ASEM Transport Ministers' Meeting held in Bali, Indonesia in September 2017 which stressed the need to improve transport connectivity in Asia and Europe through integrated intermodal and multimodal transport system and infrastructure, in order to facilitate greater movement of goods, services, people and investment. They supported stronger cooperation among ASEM partners to improve the quality, reliability, sustainability, and resilience of all transport systems. They recognised the call to introduce strategic plans for development and enhancement of transport corridors and routes between Asia and Europe.

7. Ministers also shared the view that they would effectively utilise digital connectivity in enhancing closer social and economic ties between Asia and Europe. They noted the role of the ASEM Trans Eurasia Information Network (TEIN) as a pilot platform for enhancing the digital connectivity in the ASEM region and ASEM High-level Forum on Digital Connectivity to improve the potentials of digital connectivity for innovative growth.

8. Ministers acknowledged tourism as a catalyst for intensifying people-to-people connectivity. They called for further promotion of sustainable and inclusive tourism across two continents, including conservation and management of the cultural and natural heritage. They also encouraged further travel facilitations including smart traveller programmes, to materialize responsible tourism.

9. Ministers recalled ASEM's objective to promote cultural diversity and cooperation in fostering closer people-to-people contacts, and supported the regular networking platforms among cultural professionals. They appreciated the Asia-Europe Foundation's (ASEF) unique role in promoting people-to-people connectivity, and its efforts to facilitate inter-regional exchange and cooperation in arts and culture by providing platforms for information, dialogue, networking, and partnerships among artists and cultural professionals from across all ASEM countries.

10. Ministers recognised ASEM education framework as an indispensable platform which connects peoples of Asia and Europe, particularly youths, scholars and educational institutions. They also underscored the need to accelerate collaboration in all levels of education especially in vocational education, on-job trainings, and human resource for youth empowerment. In this regard, Ministers welcomed the Republic of Korea's hosting of the 6th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting on 21-22 November 2017 under the theme "Collaboration for the Next Decade: From Common Perspectives to Effective Fulfillment," in celebration of the 10th year of the ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting.

11. Ministers commended the successful outcomes of the 31st ASEAN Summit and Related Summits held in the Philippines on 13-14 November 2017. They congratulated ASEAN for

celebrating its 50th anniversary and reiterated their support for the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the centrality of ASEAN in the evolving regional architecture in the Asia-Pacific. They appreciated ASEAN's role in promoting dialogue and confidence building and cooperation for peace, security, stability and prosperity in the region and beyond. They commended ASEAN's endeavours in expanding its relations with other ASEM partners, and noted the interest of the European ASEM partners in furthering engagement with the region through all relevant ASEAN-led processes.

**Peace**

12. Ministers emphasised the importance of mutual respect, fairness, justice and cooperation for mutual benefit to safeguard international and regional peace and stability, and committed to upholding a fair and equitable international order, the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and respect for international law, promoting democracy and the rule of law in international relations, and making joint efforts to address common traditional and non-traditional security challenges, so as to build a bright, shared future for ASEM partnership.

13. Ministers reiterated their views that terrorism constitutes a serious threat to international peace, security, stability and development, and expressed their determination to countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism in all their forms and manifestations in accordance with international law, including the Charter of the United Nations and relevant Conventions and Protocols, in particular human rights law, refugee law and international humanitarian law. Strongly condemning terrorist attacks including destruction of cultural heritage, they stressed the need to work together to counter terrorism, eliminate conditions conducive to the growth and spread of violent extremism and radicalization in societies leading towards violence, as well as the rising phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters as described in the UNSC Resolution 2178. They also emphasised the need for a comprehensive approach in countering terrorism and violent extremism, without associating them with any religion, nationality, civilisation or ethnic group. Reaffirming their resolve to combat terrorism financing as well as abuse of Internet by terrorist groups, they also stressed the importance of preventing chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear terrorism, and controlling trade in and flows of conventional arms. They called for strengthening the international legal regime, including through substantive progress in the ongoing negotiations on the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism at the United Nations. They took note of the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

14. Ministers recognised the importance of moderation as an approach that can bridge differences and counter all forms of extremism by promoting dialogue, mutual respect, tolerance and understanding, thereby contributing to peace and security. To this end, the Ministers expressed their support for the moderation approach as espoused among others, in particular by the Global Movement of Moderates.

15. Ministers pledged to continue to uphold the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and their universality, promoting disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction through, among others, the establishment of nuclear weapon free

zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at the States concerned in accordance with the 1999 UNDC guidelines. Ministers welcomed the establishment on 29th August 2017 of the IAEA Low Enrich Uranium Bank Facility in Kazakhstan, as a significant step that will facilitate peaceful nuclear cooperation and strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

16. Ministers condemned in the strongest terms the DPRK's 6th nuclear test conducted on 3rd September 2017, and its multiple ballistic missile launches as unacceptable, posing a significant threat to peace and security in the Korean Peninsula and beyond. They called for the DPRK's full and unconditional compliance with its obligations under UN Security Council Resolutions as well as the Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks, to refrain from further provocative actions and to abandon its nuclear and ballistic missile programme in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner. Reaffirming their determination to achieve lasting peace and denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula through peaceful diplomatic and political means, they agreed on the need for all States of the international community to effectively and comprehensively implement United Nations Security Council Resolutions**.** They also stressed the importance of working to reduce tensions in the Korean peninsula and beyond. They noted the initiatives of the Republic of Korea to improve inter-Korean relations toward establishing lasting peace on the Korean peninsula. They exchanged views on the importance of addressing the human rights situation and humanitarian concerns of the international community, including the abductions issue. They also shared the view that the upcoming Pyeongchang winter Olympic Games, with the widest possible participation, could serve as a useful occasion to promote peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula and beyond.

17. Ministers recalled the tragedy of the downing of flight MH17, which occurred on 17th July 2014, and renewed their sympathy to all those who have lost their loved ones. Such acts of violence threaten the safety of civil aviation. Those responsible for the downing of MH17 must be held accountable and brought to justice, in accordance with the United Nations Security Council resolution 2166 (2014).

18. Ministers reiterated their commitment to long-term progress and stability in Afghanistan, and the need for the peace process to be Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and inclusive. They also exchanged views on a wide ranging issues including middle-east peace process to realize the two-state solution for Israel-Palestine conflict as the viable way of achieving a lasting peace; nation-wide ceasefire in Syria; stabilization and reconstruction process in Iraq underlining the need for an inclusive reconciliation process; the role of the United Nations in fostering intra-Libyan political dialogue; resumption of meaningful peace negotiations in Yemen to achieve an enduring ceasefire and to facilitate humanitarian access; and the situation in Ukraine. They also underlined their strong support for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between the EU/E3 +3 and Iran, subsequently endorsed in UNSC Resolution 2231, and called for the continued full implementation of the JCPOA by all sides.

19. Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to ensure peace, stability and prosperity and to promote maritime security, safety and cooperation, freedom of navigation and overflight and unimpeded commerce and to combat piracy and armed robbery at sea in full compliance with the

principles of international law. They agreed on the critical importance of confidence building measures, of refraining from the use or threat of force, and of disputes being resolved in accordance with principles of international law, the UN Charter and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

20. Ministers devoted particular attention to the unprecedented humanitarian emergencies, irregular migration and refugee challenge, smuggling and trafficking in persons occurring in Asia and Europe. They underlined that irregular migration is a global challenge, requiring a comprehensive international response. ASEM partners have joint interest in tackling irregular migration, migrant smuggling and human trafficking. Ministers stressed the need to tackle the root causes of irregular migration, refugee problems, and forcibly displaced people, and to intensify cooperation on return and readmission and especially in the preparation of the UN Global Compact for safe, orderly and regular migration and the UN Global Compact for refugees.

21. Ministers recalled the outcomes of the 10th and 11th ASEM Summits, where Leaders identified ICT as a key element of modern infrastructure and digital connectivity, and decided to mainstream both hard and soft connectivity in all relevant ASEM activities. They stressed the importance of security of and in the use of the information and communication technologies (ICTs). They emphasised the need to enhance cooperation and coordination among ASEM partners to promote a peaceful, secure, open and cooperative ICT environment on the basis of universally accepted norms, rules and principles for responsible state behaviour and to prevent potential use of ICTs for criminal and terrorist purposes through trust and confidence-building between states as well as capacity-building and technology transfer.

22. Ministers stressed their commitments to protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms for all and to achieve gender equality. They emphasised the important role of governments, international and national human rights institutions and regional organizations in the promotion and protection of human rights in the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, thus strengthening the exchange of experience and cooperation between governments, including anti-corruption authorities, as well as parliaments and the judiciary of Asia and Europe. In this regard, they commended the informal ASEM seminars on human rights. Recognizing the important role of democratic principles and good governance, they stressed on accountability, fight against corruption, anti-money laundering and the denial of safe haven. They also emphasised that greater attention should be paid to civil and political rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights, and the right to development, in accordance with the principles and the purpose of the Charter of the United Nations.

**Sustainable Development**

23. Ministers underlined that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represents a breakthrough in the international community's collective approach towards achievement of sustainable development by 2030. They underscored the need for all stakeholders to work on ambitious and integrated implementation, including the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, domestically as well as internationally. They recalled the outcome of the 11th

ASEM Summit and reaffirmed their commitment to the ASEM Tangible Cooperation Areas, which advance the 2030 Agenda in the ASEM Context.

24. Ministers stated their support for exchanging knowledge and best practices within the ASEM framework on key policy areas, and continued engagement in the bi-regional cooperation between the Danube and Mekong regions as an example in transforming shared challenges related to transboundary water management as well as food and energy security into opportunities for inclusive growth and sustainable development.

25. Ministers welcomed the reactivation of the 7th ASEM Economic Ministers' Meeting (EMM 7) held in Seoul, Republic of Korea on 21-22 September 2017, which highlighted the needs to reconnect Asia-Europe through innovative partnership for inclusive prosperity, where innovation and technology will play an important role in regional and global economic development. They shared the views of the 7th ASEM Economic Ministers' Meeting on facilitating and promoting trade and investment, strengthening economic connectivity and sustainable and inclusive growth and ensuring that the benefits of economic globalization are widely shared in a more inclusive way. They noted the EMM's acknowledgment of the 4th Industrial Revolution would bring about fundamental technological change in the ASEM region and took note of the "Seoul intiative on the 4th Industrial Revolution".While recognizing the challenges and opportunities that the world economy faces, they reaffirmed the outcome of the EMM 7, including their commitment to an open world economy.

26. Ministers expressed support for the rules-based multilateral trading system with the WTO at its centre, keeping markets open, promoting trade facilitation and liberalization, fighting all forms of protectionism, and ensuring free and open trade on a level playing field.

27. Ministers recognised the contribution of ASEM seminars in support of the financing of SMEs and the work of ASEM SMEs Eco-Innovation Centre (ASEIC) in promoting cooperation of green growth with a particular emphasis on inclusive financing and serving MSMEs as well as spreading eco-innovation principles and practices among MSMEs in both regions given their leading role in achieving inclusive, innovation-led economic growth.

28. Ministers expressed concerns over the complex impact of Illegal Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IUUF) on ecology, economy, as well as the well-being of countries and regions, in particular coastal states. Noting the multidimensional effects of IUUF, they underscored the utility of ASEM as a platform for maritime cooperation in combating IUUF practices and protecting maritime resources.

29. Ministers expressed concern over negative impacts of climate change, environmental degradation and natural disasters on the sustainable development of ASEM partners. They recognised the role of strong political commitment to the full and swift implementation of the Paris Agreement in coherence with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances in order to foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions. They also emphasised the importance of finance,

technology transfer and capacity-building for the implementation of relevant agreements. International cooperation and national action are both needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from different sources, including unsustainable industrial, transportation and forestry practices in line with the commitments made by each country in the context of the Paris Agreement. They also stressed the need to enhance collaborative efforts in climate financing, research and development of new technology as well as preventing deforestation and desertification, and promoting common resilience and disaster prevention, people centred approach to disaster prevention, mitigation, adaptation, preparedness, awareness and response programmes, early warning systems, search, rescue and relief operations, and application of innovation and technology.

30. Recognizing the importance of energy security, enhanced resource efficiency and a circular economy approach for long term sustainable development, ministers agreed to promote research and development cooperation on economically viable, low greenhouse gas emission technologies and welcomed the work towards developing the International Solar Alliance as an important tool for addressing energy needs through utilisation of solar energy. They welcomed the successful outcome of International Specialized Exhibition EXPO-2017 on the theme "Future Energy" and establishment of International Centre for green technologies and investment projects under EXPO infrastructure.

31. Recognizing youth as the future of ASEM, Ministers called for initiatives that support cooperation and interactions among youth in all dimensions under the ASEM process. They acknowledged the role of ASEF in youth exchange and cooperation between Asia and Europe. They reaffirmed that they would support cooperation in all levels of education especially in vocational and technical education and training as an important process to promote the role of youth in the shared development of the two continents.

32. Ministers recognised the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment, including economic empowerment of all women and girls, as well as access to health and quality education for all as one of the main tools for enhancing economic prosperity and implementing SDGs. They reiterated their support to the ASEM dialogue on women's economic empowerment and called for concrete initiatives in areas such as improving and increasing accessibility of technology among women, girls and youth. They also recognised the importance of full and equal participation of women in conflict prevention, crisis management, conflict resolution and peacebuilding and its positive effects on international peace and security.

**Future of ASEM**

33. Ministers welcomed the activities organised by ASEM partners in 2017 and those planned for -2018 (ANNEX II), which encompass cooperation across the 20 areas of tangible cooperation. Underlining the importance of strengthening tangible cooperation, they welcomed recommendations to link various initiatives and projects, which cut across inter-related Tangible Cooperation Areas in order to maximise outcomes.

34. Ministers commended ASEF's activities and contributions which complement the government-led ASEM process, particularly in the fields of youth, culture and education (ANNEX III).

35. Ministers congratulated Myanmar for the successful hosting of the 8th Model ASEM and the 11th ASEF Journalists' Seminar in close collaboration with ASEF on the sidelines of the 13th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

36. Ministers expressed appreciation to the Chair for the effective conduct of the Meeting and warm hospitality. They looked forward to the 14th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting to be held in Spain in 2019 and welcomed EU's offer to host the 12th ASEM Summit in Brussels, in 2018.

**Annex I** ASEM Connectivity (Definition, Scope of Work and Timeline)

**Annex II** Calendar of ASEM Meetings & Initiatives in 2017-2018

**Annex III** ASEF's Contributions to the ASEM Process in 2017-2018: Selected Projects

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