

## **Congratulatory Message on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of ASEM Foundation**

(March 1, 1996 - March 1, 2019)

On the occasion of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of ASEM foundation, which falls on 1 March, on behalf of the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and on my own behalf, I would like to convey my sincere congratulation and best wishes to the Lao people and all of ASEM member countries.

Throughout 23 years of its existence, ASEM has gradually evolved and transformed itself into an important and unique forum connecting Asia and Europe for political dialogue, economic cooperation and socio-cultural exchange, based on principles of mutual respect, equal partnership and mutual benefit as well as tackling emerging global challenges together.

At the 12<sup>th</sup> ASEM Summit held in October last year in Brussels, ASEM members adopted the 12<sup>th</sup> ASEM Summit Chair's Statement focusing on the importance of cooperation on multilateralism, maintaining an open world economy and upholding the rules-based multilateral trading system with the shared interest of all ASEM partners in strengthening Asia and Europe sustainable connectivity, as a means of bringing countries, people and societies closer together.

Since joining ASEM in 2004, the Lao PDR has contributed to and actively participated in the ASEM activities and will continue to closely work with ASEM members and partners to further uphold the value and support the ASEM process. To celebrate this year ASEM Anniversary, the Lao PDR plans to organise activities aiming at promoting awareness, visibility and better understanding of ASEM to the Lao people including lecture on ASEM Cooperation for the National University students.

On this auspicious occasion, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all ASEM members for their continuous support, cooperation and assistance extended to the Lao PDR. I sincerely hope that the long-lasting and good cooperation between Asia and Europe will be further strengthened and move forwards into a new level for mutual benefits of the people of the two continents.

**Saleumxay KOMMASITH**  
**Minister of Foreign Affairs**