

REPORT ON PANEL DISCUSSION 1: CONNECTIVITY AND EFFECTIVE MULTILATERALISM

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the Panel Discussion 1, ASEP Parliamentarians exchanged views on Connectivity and Effective Multilateralism. We have had fruitful and thought-provoking discussions on this comprehensive and extensive topic. During the discussion, a broad range of issues and perspectives were shared. The panel discussion showed the meaningfulness of parliamentarians come together to share views in order to enhance connectivity and effective multilateralism. The panel discussion went as follows:

Firstly, importance of mainstreaming connectivity into all relevant ASEM cooperation frameworks was underlined. We, ASEP parliamentarians agreed that greater connectivity between the peoples, parliaments and governments of Asian and European countries through development and improvement of trans-regional transport routes, corridors and networks, and promotion of exchange programs will contribute towards increase of free flows of goods, services, capital and people leading to better understanding and closer relationship between the two regions.

Thus, we reaffirmed our commitment to make achievements in policy, economy and trade infrastructure construction, and financing and people-to-people connections to promote Eurasian development, narrow the gap between countries and pursue coordinated development.

Secondly, we, ASEP parliamentarians, realized that globalization requires the two regions to intensify cooperation and minimizing divergence through the formulation of policies that ensure greater wealth distribution. Thus, we underlined that Asia and Europe should address imbalances on the international trade system by supporting the establishment of a fair trade regime; and the formulation of policies that ensure the participation of everyone in the global supply chain and the formulation of income distribution policy to address the ongoing inequality. It was additionally suggested that for both regions to prosper sustainably, political commitment of both Governments and Parliaments beyond the inter-regional meetings, as well as direct participation of people in the decision-making process are required. Parliamentarians suggested that sharing knowledge and exchanging best practices are the ways of overcoming economic difficulties and solving the root causes of financial crisis.

Thirdly, it was underlined that due to the revolutionary changes in the communication and information technology, the world is experiencing the

Internet-induced connectivity as never before. Technology, trade and talent drive the Knowledge Economies of the contemporary world. We must put its weight behind these for the greater good of its members through sharing and exchange of technology, experience and capacity.

For strengthening 'soft' connectivity, it was also noted that opening the doors for the young people from Asia and Europe to participate freely in exchanges of education, culture and science is crucial. The youth are highlighted as the connectors of the connectivity. In this light, it was suggested that youth participation in political environment with their new spirits should be promoted. Additionally, initiatives based on application of modern technologies and promotion of transparency and accountability so-called e-governance should become areas of cooperation among us within the ASEP. In accordance, it was proposed to establish a working group of the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership on development of concept of e-governance in terms of enhancing connectivity between the two continents' parliamentarians.

Fifthly, we underlined that effective multilateralism is one crucial pillar for the promotion of Eurasian cooperation and progress. The international community must emerge as one entity to tackle burning issues. Some achievements of international cooperation and understanding, such as Iranian nuclear deal and Paris Agreement on Climate Change are given as eloquent examples. However, it was stressed that there is still room for improvement. Political cooperation is important considering the need to maintain a predictable, stable, and rules-by international order at this time where the Asia-Pacific regions is witnessing profound shifts. To ensure peace and security of all the peoples of Asia and Europe, open dialogue and mutual trust are essential. The challenges such as financial and economic crisis, environmental issues, food shortages, global poverty, instability and irregular migration we face are common. Thus it was noted that frequent and honest dialogue is essential between the two continents.

During the panel discussion, it was also underlined that equality – with regard to gender, education, health and income; as well as women's participation in the labour market – are two important prerequisites for increased productivity, economic growth, and development in our societies. Accordingly, parliamentarians were encouraged to take international and national measures to defeat inequality. ASEP partners agreed that inclusiveness in terms of both social and gender equality are crucial impetus for sound economic policies.

Parliamentarians, recognizing the complementarity of the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, considered it vital to unite the efforts of Asian and European countries in implementing the

goals set in these two landmark documents with a view to bringing about sustained growth and prosperity to all people of the world. We stressed the increasing need for ASEM partners to expand their development cooperation and the crucial roles of Parliamentarians in the implementation process.

Last but not least, multilateral fora of institutionalized cooperation in the parliamentary field such as ASEP, have a main role to play, while the strengthening of coordination mechanisms and the promotion of concrete cooperation within ASEM is a task that should be taken forward. It is necessary that we must learn the best practices from one another in making Parliaments the effective voice of the people. There is a need to promote informal channels of diplomacy on a people-to people level which will make it easy for the Governments to carry forward the common endeavour for mutual benefit.