



ASEM CONFERENCE ON PROMOTING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN ASIA AND EUROPE

Nha Trang, Viet Nam, 15 – 17 May 2019

SUMMARY REPORT

1. The ASEM Conference on Promoting Economic and Social Inclusion in Asia and Europe – a joint initiative by Australia, China, Denmark, the EU, Hungary, Indonesia, Ireland, Japan, Lao PDR, New Zealand, Romania, Singapore and Viet Nam, was organized in the city of Nha Trang, Viet Nam, on 15 – 17 May 2019. The event was endorsed by Leaders at the 12th ASEM Summit held in Brussels in October 2018 with a view to provide a venue for richer discussions and broader perspectives in tackling global issues related to economic and social inclusion and to reinforce ASEM partnership in the new era of development.

2. The Conference gathered about 180 participants, including ASEM government officials, researchers, experts, and representatives from the World Economic Forum, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UNWomen), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Asia – Europe Foundation, etc.

3. In his address, Leader of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam noted of the emerging challenges that are hindering efforts of achieving sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development. He, therefore, highlighted the urgent need for ASEM's actions to fight inequalities, build peaceful, inclusive and resilient societies, and secure the future of the planet and the wellbeing of future generations. He called on the participants to explore new approaches and concrete measures for tangible cooperation between the two continents to advance inclusion and achieve inclusive growth with far-reaching impacts on both developing and developed economies, large and small, across Asia and Europe.

4. During the discussions, participants highlighted that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development had set the world on a collective journey to combat inequalities within and among countries, to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies. Participants also renewed their commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate change, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the outcomes of other major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields. Participants also stressed the determination to take bold and transformative steps urgently needed to shift the two continents onto a sustainable and resilient path, with a pledge to leave no one behind. They also underscored that actions to address economic and social inequalities and sustainable development must be incorporated into national strategies where relevant and called for an integrated approach at local, national, inter-regional and international level, with broad-based concerted actions from all levels of society, public and private and the engagement of all stakeholders. Furthermore, participants emphasized the importance of ensuring peace and stability as a prerequisite. They highlighted the need for more dedicated efforts in improving measurement of economic and social inclusion, especially in the digital economy.

5. The Conference stressed the importance of developing a holistic set of policies and measures to promote the multiple dimensions of inclusion. The roles played by various stakeholders, including government officials, senior policy-makers, researchers, universities, media, businesses, regional, international organizations and other stakeholders in achieving economic and social inclusion was also underlined. Participants stressed the importance of capacity development, good governance at all levels, innovation and technologies application, development finance, public – private partnership enhancement, labour market integration, etc. Many good experiences and best practices, including local, bilateral, sub-regional and regional cooperation, were shared.

6. Participants discussed and proposed a number of recommendations to enhance the tangible cooperation between ASEM partners to promote economic and social inclusion, including:

- (i) Enhancing ASEM contributions to global efforts in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- (ii) Furthering exchange of views, lessons learned, best practices among ASEM and between ASEM and other partners, especially with regards to integrating economic and social inclusion, and the SDGs into development plans from a long-term and cross-sectorial perspective;
- (iii) Facilitating and strengthening linkages to various initiatives, projects and cross-cutting and interrelated ASEM's Tangible Cooperation Areas on Women's Empowerment, Poverty Reduction, Education and Human Resources Development, Vocational Training & Skills Development, Sustainable Water Management, Food safety issues, Youth cooperation, etc.;
- (iv) Advancing multi-stakeholder partnership and strengthening an ASEM network of experts, government officials, academic circles, cities and/or local governments, international institutions and private sectors to share experiences, update new initiatives and make recommendations for ASEM's cooperation on promoting economic and social inclusion;
- (v) Developing eco-systems for harnessing the benefits of digitalization and globalization, promoting economic opportunity by fostering structural reform, taking measures to remove barriers to training and employment, strengthening active labour market policies, supporting human capital development, encouraging corporate social responsibility and public-private partnership, facilitating MSMEs participation in a higher global value chain;
- (vi) Promoting financial inclusion to reach the poor and marginalized through digital finance and e-commerce and expanding access to credit in order to reduce shocks induced by disasters and climate change such as health issues, loss of jobs, disability, among others;
- (vii) Enhancing the social empowerment of women, youth, the elderly, persons with disabilities, indigenous people, rural communities and other under-represented and vulnerable groups, by ensuring progress in poverty reduction, gender equality, equitable and universal access to quality education at all levels, better health care and social protection, and promoting policies and social investments to enhance people's capacity to prepare and adapt to potential disruptions of the Fourth Industrial Revolution;
- (viii) Promoting the empowerment of women and girls by engaging all stakeholders in addressing biases against women, strengthening women's voice and representation, removing gender policy barriers on gender inequality, bridging the gender digital gap, facilitation access to capital, technologies, quality education, especially those in the rural and remote areas, and fostering women's financial inclusion;
- (ix) Promoting assistance in narrowing the development gap, especially in education and training, technology and digitalization, and ICT application, and fostering sub-regional and regional cooperation among ASEM members; providing support from developed members of ASEM to developing ones to have access to financing, technology transfers, smart investment and capacity building, to implement international agreements and commitments to leave no one behind;
- (x) Accelerating investment in quality infrastructure, improving access to energy, and enhancing physical, institutional and people-to-people connectivity, including to under-developed, remote and rural areas;
- (xi) Enhancing dialogue, collaboration and synergies between ASEM and other regional and international organizations and/or forums, especially those working in the areas of fostering economic and social inclusion, including the United Nations, G20, APEC, ASEAN.

7. Participants commended Viet Nam for successfully hosting this important Conference and encouraged ASEM partners to participate in/ organize future events of this nature to further promote the ASEM tangible cooperation in economic and social inclusion to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals as well as to enhance the visibility of ASEM cooperation.

8. The outcomes and recommendations of the Conference will be reported to the 14th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Spain in December 2019 and the 13th ASEM Summit in Cambodia in 2020.

Nha Trang City, Viet Nam, 17 May 2019.
