

## **Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)**

The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is a dialogue forum officially established in 1996 to bridge Asia and Europe, comprising of 51 Partners, that includes 49 Member Countries and 2 International Organisations (ASEAN Secretariat and European Commission). At present, ASEM represents around 60% of the World's Population, 52% of the Global GDP and almost 68% of the World's Trade, and thus has the potential of becoming an important and highly effective region-to-region dialogue and cooperation framework to build sustainable peace, prosperity and stability across the two Continents. India became a member of ASEM in 2007.

2. ASEM Summit Level meetings are held biennially. 9 ASEM Summits have been held so far. India's first Summit level participation was at the 7<sup>th</sup> Summit held in Beijing on 24-25 October 2008, where Prime Minister led the Indian delegation. The 8<sup>th</sup> ASEM Summit was held in Brussels on 4-5 October 2010 where Vice President led the Indian delegation. The Indian delegation was led by External Affairs Minister in the 9<sup>th</sup> ASEM Summit held in Vientiane, Lao PDR from November 5-6, 2012. Apart from Summits, meetings of the Foreign Ministers, Ministers of Finance, Culture, Environment, Mayors and Governors, and Parliamentarians are also held regularly.

3. ASEM discussions so far have tended to concentrate on political dialogue. The 9<sup>th</sup> ASEM Summit (ASEM 9) held in Vientiane, Lao PDR from November 5-6, 2012, sought to enhance cooperation between Asia and Europe through a review of the ongoing global and regional transformation, discuss issues relating to certain key regional hot spots and to evolve consensus on reforms in the global and regional architecture. Discussions at the ASEM 9 sought to increase understanding between leaders of Asia and Europe, in addressing common challenges and opportunities. While acknowledging that the equity of discussions and exchange has improved significantly, Leaders proposed measures on the future direction of ASEM, highlighting the importance of improving working methods and working for practical outcomes.

4. In the ASEM Symposium on "Towards Peace and Prosperity in Asia and Europe: The Need of a Dynamic ASEM", held in Yangzhou, China from April 25-26, 2013, co-sponsored by India, China, Lao PDR, Poland and ASEF (Asia-Europe Foundation), Senior Officials and delegates from the 51 ASEM members had very frank and open discussions on the future of ASEM and the ways to improve its overall mechanism and functioning. The Symposium witnessed a near universal call by Asian and European members alike, for reorientation of the ASEM meetings format, agendas and the outcome documents.

5. India is hosting the 11<sup>th</sup> ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting from November 11-12, 2013 and the preparatory SOMs in September and November 2013.

## **Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)**

6. The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) is the only permanent institution of ASEM, established in 1997 to promote greater mutual understanding between Asia and Europe through intellectual, cultural and people-to-people exchanges. Through ASEF, civil society concerns are included as a vital component of deliberations of ASEM. India became a member of ASEF in 2007 during its second expansion from 39 to 45 countries. Since joining in 2007, India was contributing US\$ 100,000 annually to ASEF

till 2010 and increased its contribution to US\$ 120,000 from 2011 onwards. India hosted the 29<sup>th</sup> ASEF Board of Governors' (BoG) meetings in New Delhi from October 9-13, 2012.

## ASEF Projects

7. ASEF organises thematic based projects in Asia and Europe through conferences, lecture series, workshops, seminars and use of web-based platforms. Broadly, themes covered are environment and sustainable development; economy and society; public health; art and culture; education and academic cooperation; human rights and governance; and inter-communal dialogue. ASEF projects in India have focussed on educational and art programmes, lecture tours, and Asia-Europe democratisation and justice series focussing on improving the role of police in Asia and Europe. Partner organisations in India to ASEF projects include; (i) Jawaharlal Nehru University (ii) Developing Countries Research Centre, University of Delhi, (iii) Goethe Institute/Max Mueller Bhawan, (iv) Khoj International Arts Association, (v) Ministry of Human Resource Development, (vi) St. Marks Sr. Secondary School, New Delhi, (vii) The Gati Forum and (viii) Cityspinning. These projects have largely been civil society driven. Since its inception ASEF has implemented over 500 projects, bringing together more than 15,000 direct participants and reaching out to an even wider audience in Asia and Europe.

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