



ASEM 6

The 6th ASEM Summit at the level of Heads of State and Government will take place in Helsinki on 10 and 11 September 2006. It will be a historically significant event as it will also mark the 10th anniversary of the ASEM process.

The overarching theme of the Summit will be "10 Years of ASEM: Global Challenges – Joint Responses", reflecting both the common objectives and global developments.

The agenda of the Helsinki Summit consists of the following broad areas of cooperation:

- Strengthening multilateralism and addressing global security threats
 - Globalisation and competitiveness
- Sustainable development including environment and energy security
- Dialogue among cultures and civilisations

ASEM 6 Asia-Europe Meeting

Helsinki, 10–11 September 2006



What is ASEM?

ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) is a cooperation forum for Asian and European countries. It was initiated to strengthen dialogue and interaction between the two regions, based on an equal partnership. The inaugural ASEM Summit was held in Bangkok, Thailand, in 1996.

The ASEM cooperation comprises 39 partners, including the 25 Member States of the European Union, the European Commission, 10 ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries and China, Japan and Republic of Korea. The ASEAN countries are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

The ASEM process consists of meetings focusing on different fields and convening on various levels. The most important meeting formations include the meetings of the Heads of State and Government, which are organised every two years alternately in Asia and Europe. In addition to the Summits, there are also different ministerial meetings and meetings on the senior official and expert level.

What does ASEM do?

ASEM offers leaders of the Asian and European countries a forum for the exchange of views and for cooperation. It does not aim at creating new structures but its purpose is rather to complement work carried out in bilateral and multilateral fora such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organisation.

In addition to political dialogue, sustainable economic and social development is promoted through concrete initiatives. The strength of ASEM lies in its multidimensional character. The cooperation takes place under three pillars: a political pillar, an economic pillar and a cultural pillar.



Political pillar

International security and the promotion of effective multilateralism are at the core of cooperation in the political field. The issues discussed include the fight against terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and their proliferation, the UN reform, the impact of globalisation, global environment challenges and human rights. In recent years, environmental issues and climate change in particular have become increasingly important. Furthermore, major international issues and recent regional developments are also discussed at ASEM meetings. Of the regional issues, the situation in the Korean peninsula has become one of the most topical issues.

Economic pillar

The ASEM countries cover approximately half of the world's GNP, which is one of the reasons why economic cooperation has been the driving force behind the ASEM process. Cooperation in the field of economy offers the partners a possibility to promote trade and investment, discuss ways to tighten cooperation in other areas and aim at harmonising procedures related to economic activities, for instance by supporting the WTO negotiations.

Cultural pillar

In the social, cultural and intellectual field, the objective is to develop dialogue between Asia and Europe and increase mutual awareness in order to strengthen unity in diversity. Dialogue among the Asian and European citizens is promoted through improved opportunities for students, researchers and artists to participate in various exchange programmes and other forms of contact.

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) which constitutes the heart of the cultural dialogue is the only permanent institution of the ASEM process. It is a non-profit organisation established in Singapore in 1997, a year after the initiation of the ASEM dialogue. ASEF organises a large number of seminars, workshops and other activities to facilitate dialogue and consultations among different civil society constituencies.

