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Europa ▶ The European Commission



external relations



The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)

ASEM

The Asia-Europe Summits

ASEM III, Seoul, 19th-21st October 2000

ASEM overview

ASEM process

ASEM Summits

⇒ **EC's Priorities for the ASEM III Summit and Beyond**
⇒ **What Heads of State and Government will discuss**

September 2000

Ministerial & other meetings

1) Background

ASEM activities

The ASEM process brings together the Heads of State and Government of ten Asian countries and of the fifteen Member States of the EU, together with the President of the European Commission, in total, 26 partners. The origins of the ASEM process lie in a joint recognition that relations between our two regions need to be strengthened to reflect the increased importance of Asia on the world stage, and to move towards more balanced relations built on equal partnership.

ASEM chart

Also:
VIE & IPAP

The ASEM III Summit in Seoul from 19th to 21st October 2000 is the third such meeting. The other two were held in Bangkok in 1996 and London in 1998. The fourth Summit will be held in Denmark in 2002.

At the Seoul Summit, the European Commission will be represented by President Prodi at the Summit and Commissioner Patten at the meeting of Foreign Ministers, which will meet immediately before the Summit.

Key characteristics of the ASEM process include :

- informality : it complements rather than duplicates work being carried out in other fora)
- multidimensionality : it covers 3 dimensions - political, economic and cultural)
- emphasis on equal partnership : it avoids an "aid-based" relationship in favour of a process of dialogue and cooperation;

2) Achievements and issues

In terms of the new spirit of partnership and dialogue decided upon at the inaugural Bangkok Summit, there is little doubt that the ASEM

process has been a considerable success. Between Summits, the ASEM **political** dialogue has developed gradually but substantively, while in the **economic** field, it has been possible to work towards producing a greater consensus on the merits of multilateral liberalisation, as well as promoting an informal dialogue on practical issues relating to both trade and investment facilitation. In the social and **cultural** field, both through the Asia Europe Foundation (ASEF) and otherwise, there has been a gradual expansion of contacts and networking, which in the longer-term will promote greater mutual awareness and understanding.

The October Summit will help to safeguard the momentum of the ASEM process, and ensure that concrete benefits continue to be shown. It will also have a key role here in setting the way forward for the process as a whole.

3) The process

Overall coordination of the ASEM process is in the hands of Foreign Ministers and their senior officials, who are assisted by four informal co-ordinators (the European Commission and the Presidency for the EU, and currently Thailand and Korea for the Asian side).

Key meetings within the ASEM process include the following :

- the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) carries forward the political agenda;
- the Senior Officials' Meeting on Trade and Investment (SOMTI) provides the forum in which to address economic issues;
- Senior officials of Finance Ministries (Finance Deputies) address financial issues;
- the Asia-Europe Business Forum meets yearly to exchange views between the public and private sectors.

In addition to these "core" meetings, a series of expert-level working groups have been established, including :

- those which focus on trade issues such as standards, customs, intellectual property rights, government procurement etc;
- an Investment Experts Group;
- in the social and cultural field, a number of meetings on child welfare, cultural heritage and a young leaders symposia;
- a range of cultural and intellectual events arranged through the Asia-Europe Foundation.

Beyond

see also: <http://asem3.org/>

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