

# Director's Note on ASEM 4

On earlier occasions we emphasized the crucial importance of the ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) as a unique instrument for dialogue, cooperation, and inter-civilizational understanding between the European and Asian countries participating in the ASEM.\* Not all our readers will appear to be informed about the recent summit in Copenhagen, yet with decisions taken by the heads of state – at times reaching a practical level – it could be useful to take note of this summit and the decisions.

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note >

By *Wim Stokhof*

On the web links listed below you will find the chairman's statement of the ASEM 4 summit. In a previous director's note, it was suggested that if we really want ASEM to become engrained in the daily life of ASEM states' 'inhabitants', more attention ought to be given to the numerous initiatives ventured by various sectors from civil society (a bottom-up trajectory) such as universities, research groups, sport associations, professional associations, labour unions, think-tanks, and artists. It was proposed to introduce consultative forums such as a workers' platform and a research platform – just like the Asia-Europe Business Forum or the newly planned taskforce – where decisions could be shaped and advice formulated. In the current chairman's statement, however, not much can be found about enhancing links between ASEM and sections of civil society. Although this can easily be explained by the fact that ASEM is a construct invented by heads of state (a top-down trajectory), we believe that this lack of interest in connecting with ASEM's basic constituency is a missed chance.

As you can see from the chairman's statement, the leaders discussed quite a range of topics: terrorism, education, human resources development, environmental cooperation, enhancement of ASEM cooperation, and the Korean Peninsula. In addition, it was decided to set up several conferences

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\* The participating countries are Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, Brunei, Singapore, Vietnam (seven ASEAN countries), China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, the fifteen members of the European Union plus the European Commission.

#### More information

For the full text of the chairman's statement at the Fourth Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM 4) held in Copenhagen, 23–24 September 2002, refer to: [www.iias.nl/iiasn/29/index.html](http://www.iias.nl/iiasn/29/index.html) or [www.iias.nl/asem/events/summits/asem4](http://www.iias.nl/asem/events/summits/asem4)  
More information on ASEM can be found at: [www.iias.nl/asem](http://www.iias.nl/asem)  
Pleasant reading!



and meetings. What will really happen after these gatherings is difficult to predict. ASEM is in need of well-planned long-term comprehensive programmes with concrete deliverables, good monitoring, evaluation, reporting procedures, and relevant down-to-earth follow-up activities. Decisions must be taken and carried out in terms of clear objectives, effective instrumentation, timetables, sound sustainable financing, and a smoothly running non-virtual (!) secretariat.

It cannot be denied that the ASEM dialogue has proved to be essential in building mutual awareness and understanding between our two regions. The ASEM process is a slow and very complicated exercise that will not so easily yield tangible results. Yet, much more can be obtained if ASEM's gratuitous, ad hoc character – now celebrated by the European Commission as one of its key characteristics, 'informality', but to my mind one of its weaknesses – could be abolished. ◀

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