

Nom del diàleg: Diàleg orient - occident

Data: 2 Juliol

Sessió: "Cultura, desenvolupament i models socio-econòmics:
una visió comparada d'Àsia i Amèrica Llatina"

Ponent: Nguyen Dang Quang



Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted and honoured to be able to participate in this Forum on a topic of such importance to all of us: East – West Dialogue. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Forum’s Secretariat and the Spanish Government for the initiative they have taken to host this significant gathering. With the theme of Regional Integration: Looking for Models, I would like to talk about the Prospects for Asia - Europe partnership.

The challenges of the world

We are now living in a new century which the prevailing trends in the world are peace and cooperation for development. However, the world today is confronted with a variety of challenges. The international situation is undergoing profound and complicated changes, particularly the emerging threats to global security. The world continues to suffer traditional and non-traditional challenges as well as hard and soft threats.

As globalization deepens and states become more interdependent, terrorism in its all forms remains a serious threat to global stability. In the wake of the terrorist attacks of September

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11 and unexpected tragedies in Bali and Madrid recently, the international community finds itself confronted with new threats previously unmatched in scale. These dangers have raised a number of questions to the ability of the international community to deal with them.

The rapid globalization and increasing interdependence in the world have brought about diverse and interconnected challenges to the international community. More outstanding and urgent threats are those "soft" security threats such as extreme poverty, disparity of wealth between and within societies, negative effects of globalization especially to the developing countries, climate change and severe environmental degradation, massive displacement of peoples, and contagious diseases. All forms of these challenges, the traditional and the non-traditional, the hard and the soft are imposing transnational problems and calling for international and collective responses.

The international community is also increasingly concerned about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Therefore, against the circumstances of new global challenges and fundamental changes in the world, a multilateral approach to solving common global problems has become an imperative necessity.

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Asia – Europe cooperation: responding to new challenges

The evolution of human society is a history of progress by surmounting challenges. The threats and challenges we are facing now cannot be addressed by any single nation and nor can any country survive by isolationism. Therefore, we are aware of the need of multilateral cooperation and collective efforts.

Since the end of the last century, Asia has generally maintained peace and stability and successfully worked out some sub-regional mechanisms of both economic and security cooperation. In the economic field, thanks to its decades of economic growth and social progress, Asia has advanced in regional and sub-regional economic cooperation quite remarkably. In the area of security, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) has demonstrated dynamic security cooperation. In the social and other fields, Asia as a whole is also working for more social justice, ethnic harmony and better communication interchanges.

However, Asia might be the only region that is still suffering from the leftover of the Cold War. Besides, there exist many territorial disputes over land and sea between and among many countries in the region. These traditional security issues have slowed down the integration process in Asia. The Asia is also confronting with non-traditional security threats.

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Terrorism is a serious security challenge. Some countries have become the “soft” targets of the recent terrorist attacks.

Facing with these challenges, Asia has developed a series of positive responses. After the Asian financial crisis, the cooperation between ASEAN and Northeast Asia has been strengthened and expanded. In the future, the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) might be expanded gradually into an East Asian free trade area in a strong East Asia community.

In Europe, the EU enlargement is an important event. Now, the EU of 25 member states is the biggest single market in the world. The role of the EU will be greater in the international affairs. Certainly, the expansion of the EU from 15 to 25 would bring about both opportunities and challenges to Asia. Despite the fact that Asia and Europe differ on the nature, importance and root causes as well as their solutions to new global challenges, they must joint efforts to find the best way for their cooperation in order to deal with the world’s new development.

The Asia – Europe Meeting (ASEM), which brings Asia and Europe together, was established in 1996. It has provided a more honest and open dialogue among the Asians and the Europeans as well as the East and the West. The ASEM process has also demonstrated close economic partnership between Europe – the world’s most developed region, and Asia – the dynamic growing area. It is also a model of the cooperation between

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the North and the South. Both Asia and Europe have common purposes and mutual interests. Therefore, Asia and Europe can use ASEM process as a framework to make a positive contribution towards preserving world peace and stability, thus strengthening multilateral cooperation and deepening mutual understanding.

The ASEM process: Achievements and challenges

From a panoramic view, we witness that since its birth in March 1996, the ASEM process has developed dynamically and achieved significant results among which the most prominence is the establishment of an Asia-Europe dialogue and cooperation framework in three pillars of political, economic, social fields, which have brought about a series of diversified and significant activities. As we go into the details of the process, its achievements can be seen as follows:

The establishment of ASEM itself is a significant landmark since it has set the first ever dialogue and cooperation mechanism between Asia and Europe and moved towards a completely fresh Asia-Europe relationship on the basis of equality, mutual respect and benefit principles.

The mutual understanding and similarities between the two sides have so far increased through the informal and regular dialogue at all levels, especially at high level, thus facilitating the developments of Asia-Europe cooperation. The ASEM process has also helped to build up the

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intimate relationship among Leaders, Ministers, high-ranking officials as well as the people of ASEM partners.

Having expanded with various activities over the past years, the dialogue and cooperation fields of the ASEM process have achieved a number of fruitful results in all three pillars, namely politics, economics, society and others as well as in separate issues of each said pillar.

Political talks within the process have been showing differences in views and values of the two continents, yet helped the two sides to reach common views on many international and regional issues of mutual concern, thus help to enhance the Asia-Europe cooperation in dealing with common challenges, especially such global matters as traditional and non-traditional threats, anti-terrorism, multilateralism and the central role of the United Nations, etc.

Cooperation in the field of economics have helped facilitate business and investment circles, through the implementation of the Trade Facilitation Action Plan (TFAP) and the Investment Promotion Action Plan (IPAP). The most prominent and concrete outcome is the financial assistance of the ASEM Trust Fund (with the total capital of US\$ 40 million) rendered to Asian nations for their overcoming of the affects caused by the 1997-1998 financial crisis and upgrading of the financial and banking systems.

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Cooperation in the other fields such as culture, education, science and technology, environment and people-to-people, etc. have been experiencing various efficient activities via the core Programmes of the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) which was set up and financially contributed by ASEM partners. So far, the Foundation has implemented more than 200 projects with the involvement of about 5000 citizens coming from ASEM member countries.

The core cooperation framework and operation mechanism have been basically formulated, creating a foundation and favorable conditions for further development of the ASEM process. Besides the Summits, there have been thus far 8 Forums on various areas at the ministerial level. Joint activities have been carried out actively through the coordination of the Foreign Ministers' Meetings (FMM), Senior Officials Meetings (SOM) as well as the four ASEM coordinator countries.

The achieved results, which have been mentioned above, are due to the ASEM partners' awareness of the necessities and benefits of the enhancement of Asia-Europe cooperation, against the context of rapid globalization, regionalism and inter-regionalism as well as the emergence of new global opportunities and challenges, which require a multilateral cooperation to cope with. Furthermore, both Asian and European countries have shared their mutual aspiration to build up a balanced relationship

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among the three financial-economic centers of the world which are North America, Western Europe and East Asia.

However, it is necessary to view that the ASEM process currently still remains at its initial stage of dialogue. The process is now faced with no less difficulties and challenges ahead, which is mainly reasoned by considerable differences between Asian and European partners in their targets, interests and priorities for cooperation. Though cooperation within the ASEM partners has been considerably stepped forward, it needs and should be improved with more substance and effectiveness.

The ASEM process contributes to multilateralism

During the last two years, we witnessed series of developments with profound implications on the various aspects of the international life. They are the war in Iraq, continuing terrorist attacks in various parts of the world as well as increased violence in the Middle East. Besides, the soft threats like poverty and epidemics continue to take many innocent lives. More than ever, the bomb attacks in Bali and Madrid, SARS epidemics and bird-flu remind us, big or small, Asia or Europe, about our vulnerability.

Facing these global challenges and threats, we are more eagerly to promote existing cooperation as only multilateralism can give us the key for success. We must consider the United Nations as an irreplaceable institution and the UN should play the central role in dealing with global challenges and threats, as no single country can manage these alone.

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Strengthening international peace and security, and enhancing development remain the primary task of the UN. Only in an environment of peace and stability nations can concentrate their energy on meeting the challenges of development and achieving poverty eradication. Healthy equitable international relations can only be built on the principles of the UN Charter and international law, especially those that attach respect to national independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and non-interference in the internal affairs of states. Development cooperation, international economic and trade relations can only be built on the equal footing and mutual benefit, and on favourable assistance and facilitation for the developing countries.

To solve the global problems, especially those related to development, poverty eradication and disease prevention, practical and effective measures must be taken to pursue the UN Millennium goals and commitments made at various international conferences.

The United Nations should continue to play an important role in coordinating international efforts to effectively respond to global challenges. Asia and Europe as responsible member states and reliable partners can contribute actively to the UN's endeavor.

Promoting dialogue on cultures and civilizations: a correct way of ASEM

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We are living in a changing and unsecured world and mankind is facing challenges and threats of which the reasons are cultural intolerance and misunderstanding or inadequate instruction of one's cultural values into other.

Day by day, dialogue on cultures and civilizations have become a useful and irreplaceable tool for a peaceful world.

Asia and Europe are home to some of the world's oldest and richest civilizations. Longstanding interactions and cultural exchanges between peoples of the two continents have laid a favourable foundation for enhanced cooperation, understanding and mutual respect among ASEM partners and their people.

In recent years, dialogue on cultures and civilizations has become a main area of cooperation within the third pillar of ASEM. For the first time, the ASEM Ministerial Conference on Cultures and Civilizations was held in Beijing in December 2003. All partners share the main topics approved at the Conference, namely promoting cultural diversity in the context of globalization, educating mutual respects and appreciation of different cultures in our youth and encouraging educational exchanges between artists and other cultural professionals of ASEM partners. Together with the expression of political will, ASEM should send a strong message of its commitment to dialogue on cultures and civilizations as well as exchange

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on cultural policies at highest level. The Asia – Europe cooperation should intensify its work on these fields.

ASEM 5 Summit: Deepening the ASEM process

As agreed by ASEM members, Vietnam will be hosting ASEM 5 Summit in Hanoi on 8th – 9th October 2004 with the theme “Further Revitalizing and Substantiating the Asia – Europe Partnership”

ASEM 5 Summit is a significant event in the Asia – Europe politics and partnership. It provides a unique opportunity for leaders to exchange views, further deepen mutual understanding, revitalize and substantiate the ASEM process. As a result, the Summit should provide further dynamism for ASEM’s endeavours towards international relations based on equality, equity and mutual interest, thus elevating ASEM economic synergy to a higher level commensurate with the two region’s potentials, and consolidating unity in cultural diversity.

I wish the Forum a great success.

Thank you.

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