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## **Interview given by Federal Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier in the run-up to the ASEM Foreign Ministers Meeting in the Hamburger Abendblatt**

*What are the main topics going to be at the ASEM Foreign Ministers Meeting?*

The ASEM Foreign Ministers Meeting will be one of the largest events during our EU Presidency: 46 delegations from Asia and Europe are coming to Hamburg. Energy and climate issues will be to the fore. We are ambitious in Europe. We want to produce less carbon dioxide, because it's bad for the climate, and make greater use of renewable energies. I hope we will be able to convince our ASEM partners to show similar determination. But we will also look at the key international issues. How can we reduce the number of nuclear weapons in the world, developments in the Middle East and Afghanistan.

*Where can we expect agreement and where differences between Europe and Asia?*

Asia is a region of tremendous economic dynamism, from which German and European businesses also benefit greatly – and the export-driven Hamburg economy certainly knows that. We want to further extend this cooperation. But I also want our competition to be fair. In concrete terms, this means that we cannot have jobs being shifted from Europe to Asia just because we insist upon high environmental and social standards here which are not respected in other parts of the world. This is also something we need to work at together in the ASEM framework.

*There are going to be more than 40 delegations at the Foreign Ministers Meeting. Does that not rule out constructive talks? Would less not maybe be more?*

It may well be that discussions are more intensive in smaller groups. But what is the point of reaching agreement between a small number if others don't feel bound by your decisions? That is why I am convinced that even if such large conferences sometimes seem cumbersome, it is important to include everyone. Only those who can voice their opinion will feel committed to future cooperation. But I want to add that we also attach great importance to the bilateral talks on the fringes of the Hamburg conference. After all, direct talks are an important element of ASEM meetings. One-to-one talks and getting to know each other are indispensable when it comes to building trust.

*Will the Meeting also help prepare for the G8 Summit a week later in Heiligendamm?*

We are indeed dealing with similar issues. But despite ASEM's considerable economic clout, so far no ASEM member bar Japan belongs to the G8. So it is good to have both groupings. Those who know that ASEM countries make up 58% of global population, 60% of world trade and some 50% of global GDP realize that we cannot deal with any major global issue without Asia's involvement.

*What do you say to the anti-globalization demonstrators who are mobilizing against the G8 Summit in Heiligendamm and the ASEM Meeting?*

Democracy thrives on political debate and so peaceful protests and demonstrations are fine. I understand many of the questions the anti-globalization movement is posing. How do we make sure that low prices in Europe do not come at the cost of social exploitation in Asia or Africa? Is it right for us to close off our markets to agricultural products from poorer countries in Africa, and also Russia? We have to seriously discuss these and many other questions. Of course it has to be clear that violence doesn't help at all. On the contrary, it hinders all those who want to peacefully express their opinion.

*Why did you choose Hamburg as the venue and what do you expect from the Hanseatic City?*

Hamburg is Germany's gateway to Asia. Here we have expert knowledge of Asia which is respected the world over, and Hamburg's contacts, for example with China and Japan, are unique in both Germany and Europe. I know that our Asian guests were delighted by our choice of venue and I am sure they will feel at home here. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the City of Hamburg and all its residents for their hospitality.