

# **ASEM Foreign Ministers Meeting in Hamburg, 28/29 May 2007**

**Welcome by Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier on 28 May 2007 at the reception in the Hamburg Atlantic Hotel**



--- embargoed until beginning of speech ---

Colleagues, Heads of Delegations,

Welcome to the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg!

We have been very deliberate in our choice of location. No other city in Germany maintains such intensive relations with Asia as Hamburg does. The history of this city goes some, if not all the way, to explaining why this is.

Hamburg has been a Hanseatic city since the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The Hanse was a powerful alliance of, at one point, 72 cities and more than a hundred other associated members. In the Hanse merchants pooled their interests, worked to keep sea routes safe and thus helped trade and prosperity to flourish. The Hanse did not have any officials or financial resources of its own, but was a freely organized association formed for the mutual benefit of its members.

Some people might even see certain similarities with the ASEM group.

Hamburg has retained this historic tradition of cosmopolitanism right up to the present day

- as the largest German port and the eighth-largest port in the world,
- as a hub for European trade with Asia and
- as the seat of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

However, Hamburg is also and above all a centre of intellectual discourse and exchange with Asia.

Major Asia institutions, such as the German Asia-Pacific Business Association and the renowned German Association for Asian Studies, are located here.

This evening I would like to extend a special welcome to our six new ASEM members. We are delighted to see the extension of the ASEM family to include Bulgaria and Romania, India, Pakistan, Mongolia and the ASEAN Secretariat.

Welcome to a unique cooperation framework with a practice-oriented approach to its work, which does without large structures and which has successfully been bringing Europe and Asia together for more than 10 years now!

I would, of course, this evening also like to convey my special greetings to my colleagues in the ASEAN states and the EU, whom I saw in March this year at our EU-ASEAN meeting in Nuremberg. Thank you for being willing to make the long journey to Germany for the second time in two and a half months. We regard this as a particular honour and expression of esteem.

Finally, I would like to give a warm welcome to Javier Solana, who just over a week ago was awarded the International Charlemagne Prize of the City of Aachen for his great achievements in connection with Europe. It is the first time that Javier Solana has attended an ASEM Foreign Ministers Meeting. This underlines how much significance security policy issues have gained within the ASEM context.

Together, we in the Asia-Europe Meeting represent around 50% of world GDP, 58% of the global population and 60% of international trade.

That is a level of influence that we can and should use to an even greater degree in international politics.

Since it was founded in 1996, ASEM has undergone constant change. Within the last two years the membership of ASEM has grown from 26 to 45. That is remarkable.

The ASEM subject spectrum has also shifted. Our topics now range from current foreign policy and security issues such as the situation in the Middle East and Afghanistan, through energy and climate change and socio-political subjects such as work, employment and education, right up to intercultural and interfaith dialogue, as well as information and communication technology.

The increasingly globalized world will necessarily cause our national influence on economic governance to diminish.

At the same time our international structures and what comes under the heading of global governance are not yet strong enough for us to rely on them exclusively.

We therefore also intend to draw on regional fora such as ASEM to reach common solutions for the problems that confront us.

At political level the ASEM partners are competing for the best ideas and concepts to resolve the tasks we face for the benefit of our people.

However, ASEM can only ever be as good as the commitment and political will of its members.

With this in mind, let us use the two days we have ahead of us to the full!

Thank you.