



**PRESS RELEASE: *Monday 13 April 2009***

## **ASEM CONFERENCE: TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT Mandarin Oriental Hotel, Manila 20-21 April 2009**

Delegates from 43 countries across Asia and Europe will meet at a high-level conference in Manila, Philippines, on Monday and Tuesday of next week (20-21 April).

The event brings together more than 100 politicians and senior officials from member countries of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). They will immerse themselves in a concentrated series of dialogues in the global search to balance economic demands with sustainable development.

Keynote speeches at the conference will be made by the host Government of the Philippines; the Czech Presidency of the EU, and Mr. Koos Richelle, the European Commission's Director General of the EuropeAid Cooperation Office.

Mr. Richelle welcomed the forthcoming Conference saying: "An event like this provides an excellent opportunity for high-level influencers on policy and cooperation to engage in dynamic, meaningful dialogue. It is through precisely this kind of exchange between Europe and Asia that we promote better understanding and increase and deepen our cooperation even in this time of economic crisis."

Panel discussions will concentrate upon finding ways to resolve sensitive issues for both Europe and Asia in an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding. The themes under discussion are:

- **The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs):** The Beijing Declaration reaffirmed that the MDGs underpin international cooperation. How can global partnership and the ASEM framework contribute to taking these goals forward?
- **Climate Change:** Sustainable development can only be achieved if countries work together to combat global climate change. How best can both developed and developing countries respond to the challenges, particularly in the context of economic downturn?
- **Social Cohesion:** Social cohesion and sustainable development are mutually supportive goals and ASEM partners share a common interest in contributing to both. How can the challenges of social cohesion – such as inequalities – be addressed?
- **Aid Effectiveness:** International agreements on aid effectiveness seek to ensure greater alignment of aid with countries' own policies and strategies. What is the track record of ASEM developing countries and what are their needs in using overseas development assistance more efficiently.

At the 7<sup>th</sup> ASEM Summit in Beijing last October, partners signed off the **Beijing Declaration on Sustainable Development**. In it, leaders stressed the importance of striving to maintain environmental quality alongside economic development and social progress. It is not enough, they said, simply to uphold aspirational goals. Each ASEM member country has a responsibility to act for positive change by implementing the Beijing Declaration.

The ASEM member countries together represent half of the world's GDP, almost 60 per cent of the world's population and 60 per cent of global trade.

Their combined voice has the capacity to reach and influence the lives of hundreds of millions of people in the developing world and across the more mature economies.

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## **MEDIA ADVISORY:**

### **Media contact points:**

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### **Media facilities:**

Media can join the welcome **cocktail reception** hosted by the European Commission at the Hotel Mandarin Oriental on Sunday 19 April from 19.00 to 21.00.

The **opening ceremony** begins at 09.00 on Monday 20 April in the Mandarin Oriental Ballroom. Media wishing access are welcome until 10.30 when the closed sessions commence. Please arrive to register by 08.15.

**Interviews** with some lead speakers may be possible to set up on application.

**Press Releases** will be emailed to the ASEM database. Additions/alterations can be made to Nadine Swibenko: [nadko@yahoo.com](mailto:nadko@yahoo.com)

There will be a **press briefing** at the conference closure on Tuesday 20 April at 12.30 which will be led by Koos Richelle and Rolando Tungpalan, including a Q&A session and an invitation to lunch following.

A final Press Release will summarise conference conclusions/recommendations and will be dispatched by email. All Press Releases will be uploaded to the conference website:

[www.http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/regional-cooperation/support-regional-integration/asem/media\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/regional-cooperation/support-regional-integration/asem/media_en.htm)

### **Useful links:**

The Beijing Declaration on Sustainable Development: <http://www.asem7.cn/download/bdsd.pdf>

ASEM background: [http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/asem](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/asem) and [www.aseminfoboard.org](http://www.aseminfoboard.org)

### **ASEM partners:**

Austria, ASEAN Secretariat, Belgium, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, European Commission, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Indonesia, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Laos, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mongolia, Myanmar, Netherlands, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom, Vietnam.

### **Speakers include:**

Ralph G Recto, Director General, National Economic and Development Authority, the Philippines; Jakub Karfik, Director General, Development Cooperation Section, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Czech Republic; Koos Richelle, Director General, EuropeAid Cooperation Office, European Commission. Arjun Thapan, Director General, Southeast Asia Department, Asian Development Bank.

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