



ASEM SEMINAR ON WATER AND RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT A GREEN GROWTH APPROACH

Can Tho City, Viet Nam, 21 – 22 March 2013

SUMMARY REPORT

1. The ASEM Seminar on Water and River Basin Management - A Green Growth Approach was organized in Can Tho City, Viet Nam, on 21 – 22 March 2013. This Seminar was aimed at realizing the ASEM 9 Summit's decision to launch the ASEM Sustainable Development Dialogue – a joint initiative by Bulgaria, Hungary, Lao PDR, Romania, Thailand and Viet Nam.

2. The Seminar gathered about 150 participants, including ASEM government officials, researchers and representatives from the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), Mekong River Commission (MRC), Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) and the Hans Seidel Foundation. (The list of participants is enclosed as Annex 1).

3. H.E. Mr. Nguyen Tan Dung, Prime Minister of Viet Nam delivered the opening speech highlighting the urgent, strategic and global challenges in water management, which required states to take a long-term, multi-sectoral approach in water management and place water within the framework national sustainable development strategy. The Prime Minister called on seminar participants to discuss ways to strengthen cooperation between the two continents for sustainable water resources management and contribute to international efforts in this regard. In a keynote speech, H.E. Mr. Nguyen Minh Quang, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources of Viet Nam, emphasized the need to promote ASEM cooperation in water resource management for sustainable development, as a contribution to the 2013 International Year of Water Cooperation.

4. In the presentations and discussions, participants highlighted water as one of the pressing non-traditional security challenges, due to rising pressure caused by rapid population growth, industrialization, urbanization, economic development and climate change. These challenges know no national or administrative boundaries and their impacts cross sectors and communities. Increased volatility and sea level rise due to climate change will disproportionately affect the poor and vulnerable. The scientific challenges of water policies and the important role of research were discussed.

Participants shared the view that these trans-boundary river challenges required cooperation not only at national but also regional and global levels to strike a balance between the different needs equitably and sustainably. They saw the nexus of water, food and energy as a major global trend in the next decades. Many experiences and best practices, including bilateral, sub-regional and regional arrangements, were shared.

They highlighted global initiatives including the UN World Water Day, the International Decade for Action "Water for Life" and the World Water Council's Water and Green Growth Initiative... As home to some of the world's largest rivers, Asia and Europe have the shared responsibility and the ability to take the lead in global endeavours towards sustainable water resources management. As such, ASEM has made significant efforts and put forward a number of initiatives to integrate water resources management in achieving the MDGs and sustainable development.

5. Participants discussed and proposed a number of possible solutions to achieve sustainable management of water resources and river basins, including:

- (i) Shifting to new approaches and practices in water management which must be global, cross-sectoral and cross-functional to allow growth and poverty reduction, and developing a suite of smarter, more robust solutions in connectivity, infrastructure, institutions and information, to better adapt to the volatility of future climate change;
- (ii) Promoting green technology for water use and management and Public – Private partnership on water management;
- (iii) Enhancing policy dialogue on water issues, including trans-boundary water, with the aim to balance different interests for development;
- (iv) Strengthening ASEM's engagement with and support to sub-regional and regional cooperative mechanisms, such as the Danube and Mekong region cooperation, for water management conducted by its members;
- (v) Increasing ASEM's contributions to global efforts, particularly the upcoming Second Asia-Pacific Water Summit to be held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in May 2013 and the Budapest Water Summit in Hungary, in October 2013;
- (vi) Promoting exchanges and sharing best practices on water management;
- (vii) Promoting projects on water research, including biodiversity, in international research units such as the international Center for Advanced Studies Danube – Danube Delta – Black Sea.

6. The participants expressed their appreciation to Romania for the offer to host the next event of the ASEM Sustainable Development Dialogue in 2014, as well as Thailand's offer to be the host of a future event of this initiative. The Seminar welcomed Hungary's announcement that it will host the Budapest Water Summit under the auspices of the United Nations on 8-11 October 2013 to facilitate the process of elaboration of the Sustainable Development Goals. Prior to that, a conference will be held on the occasion of the Danube Day (June 29), within the framework of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region.

7. The outcomes and recommendations of the Seminar will be reported to the 11th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi, India, in November 2013, ASEM Environment Ministers' Meeting and the 10th ASEM Summit in Brussels, Belgium, in 2014.

Can Tho City, Viet Nam, 22 March 2013 