



Asia-Europe Meeting

April 2014 - Final

ASEM SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUE

CONCEPT PAPER

of

The 3RD ASEM Sustainable Development Seminar on

Water Management – Fostering Prosperity and Stability Through (Inter)Regional Cooperation

- 2-3 June 2014, Tulcea-Romania -

Background

In the Chair's Statement of the 10th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting (2011) and in line with the Bandar Seri Begawan Plan of Action to strengthen the ASEAN-EU enhanced partnership to support sub-regional cooperation to promote social-economic development and sustainable water management it was proposed to establish an initiative which aims at sharing good practices and experience based on similar regional cooperation in Asia and Europe, such as the Danube and Mekong regions

At the ASEM 9 Summit in 2012 ASEM leaders agreed “*to reinforce collective efforts to promote sustainable usage and management of water resources, including development and better utilisation of water resources, flood control, flood risk, mapping, water quality and quality monitoring, wetland and water related habitat conservation, urban drinking and wastewater supply planning and managing, integrated river basin management planning, and other trans-boundary water issues, in order to ensure the right to access to safe drinking water and sanitation, full policy coherence and well-functioning water-related ecosystems and in cooperation of water in all its economic social and environmental dimensions in a framework of governance, financing and cooperation*”.

During the 11th ASEM Foreign Ministers Meeting on 11-12 November 2013 in India, ASEM Ministers supported sustainable usage and integrated management of water resources. It was specifically noted that water is a promising area of cooperation and supported collaboration between ASEM partners, especially through transfer of technology and expertise in this sector. Ministers underscored the need to transform jointly the challenges related to food, water and energy security into opportunities for growth and sustainable development.

It was underlined that ASEM members should achieve result-oriented tangible outcomes under ASEM initiatives and implementation reports of such initiatives would feed into subsequent ASEM meetings and documents, including the SOM meetings.

The first ASEM Sustainable Development seminar was held in Budapest (Hungary, June 2012) and focused on the “Role of Water in Sustainable Regional Development Strategies”; it stressed the need for ASEM partners to support the launching of the initiative of an ASEM Sustainable Development Dialogue, given the *sui-generis* role that ASEM could have in international efforts of combating non-traditional security challenges.

The second seminar held in Chan Tho (Vietnam, March 2013) “Water and River Basin Management – A Green Growth Approach” discussed a number of possible solutions to achieve sustainable management of water resources and river basins, including promoting green technology for water use and management, strengthening ASEM’s engagement with and support to sub-regional and regional cooperative mechanisms, promoting exchanges and sharing best practices on water management and water research etc.. Romania, as an active participant in regional cooperation in the Danube river basin, will host the third ASEM Sustainable Development Seminar, as part of the annual series of events on this subject. Romania proposes to extend the scope of the initiative to fostering prosperity and stability through regional and inter-regional cooperation, including by the means of a soft tool, such as water diplomacy.

Objectives

The discussions of the 2 day seminar will approach water as an instrument to foster prosperity and stability on different levels, on the basis of each region's and sub-region's experience, with the aim of sharing good practices and knowledge, in order to further promote integrated water resource management at trans-boundary level:

- (inter)connectivity: physical and people-to-people connectivity at different levels - transport infrastructure, navigation, energy production and tourism - as important conditions for economic development of the riparian states;
- sustainable water management and challenges while ensuring environmental protection and regional cooperation;
- flood risk and drought management - challenges for environment and socio-economic development of regions;
- transforming food and water security into opportunities for growth, sustainable development and regional cooperation.

Concrete outcomes

The objective of the seminar is to deliver concrete policy proposals and tangible outcomes, that allow the definition of a strategy for cooperation between the two regions, to be reflected into a chair's statement which will be presented at the ASEM SOM and will later feed into the 10th ASEM Summit (16-17 October 2014, Milan, Italy). These may include:

1. Exchanges of good practices between administrative units from countries in river basins in EU and Asia, considering the Danube and Mekong regions as good examples, but opening also to other key basins in the two regions, with a view to further stimulating cooperation between Europe and Asia in water management;
2. Initiate a functional (virtual) network of experts on specific areas of work such as flood, water scarcity and drought management with the aim to share policies, best practices, expertise and ideas, in view of further discussions within future ASEM meetings and other water related events (e.g. “water summits”, Expo Milan 2015 etc.);
3. Gather useful inputs for the inclusion of “water diplomacy” in the curricula of the courses and/or training programmes dedicated to global issues and related horizontal themes organized by the ministries/diplomatic institutes of the participating countries.

Co-Sponsors: EU, Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam (open to other co-sponsors)

Participants: It is foreseen that the seminar will gather around 150 participants – senior representatives from ASEM countries, EEAS, the European Commission and the ASEAN Secretariat, government officials, representatives of the academic environment and representatives from related regional and international institutions/organizations, experts from think tanks, NGOs, public policy thinkers etc.

Dates and Venue

- **Venue:** Romania – Tulcea
- **Dates:** 2-3 June, 2014

Costs

The host will cover the organizing costs. Participants from ASEM partners are requested to cover traveling and accommodation expenses.

Language: The working language will be English.

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