

## **Declaration\* of the Eighth Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting (ASEP8)**

*6-7 October 2014, Rome, Italy*

1. The Eighth Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting (ASEP8) was held on 6-7 October 2014 in Rome, Italy, under the theme “The role of Parliaments in fostering Asia-Europe dialogue, sustainable growth and stronger governance structures” and presided over by Ms. Laura Boldrini, President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, and Mr. Pietro Grasso, President of the Italian Senate.
2. In response to the invitation of the Presidents of the Italian Parliament, Parliamentarians from ASEM countries - Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, China, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Lao PDR, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Malta, Mongolia, Myanmar, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, United Kingdom, Vietnam – and the European Parliament participated in the Meeting. The host Speakers warmly welcomed parliaments from new ASEM members, namely Bangladesh, Norway and Switzerland, to the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership. Delegations from the Parliament of Croatia and the Parliament of Kazakhstan were invited as observers, with a view to Croatia’s and Kazakhstan’s becoming full member of ASEP, as provided for in the ASEP Rules of Procedure. The Asia-Europe Foundation and the Food and Agriculture Organization also took part in this event as Guests of the Host Parliament. A non-parliamentary delegation from Bulgaria and from India also attended the Meeting.
3. Ms. Laura Boldrini, President of Italy’s Chamber of Deputies, and Mr. Pietro Grasso, President of Italy's Senate, Mr Xaysomphone Phomvihane, Vice-President of the National Assembly of Lao PDR, Host of ASEP7, delivered the opening addresses. Mr Benedetto Della Vedova, Undersecretary of State at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation responsible for relations with Asia, Oceania and Pacific countries, Mr Amarjargal Rinchinnyam, member of the State Great Hural of Mongolia, host Parliament of ASEP9 in 2016, made the final remarks, while Ms

Diana Bracco, President of Expo Milano 2015 and General Commissioner for the Italian Pavilion made a presentation on EXPO 2015 MILANO.

4. During the Meeting two panels were held on the following topics: *“Economic and financial governance structures”* and *“Sustainable growth and food security”*.
5. ASEP Parliamentarians emphasised the positive outcome of the previous seven meetings held in Strasbourg (1996), Manila (2002), Hue City (2004), Helsinki (2006), Beijing (2008), Brussels (2010) and Vientiane (2012), which laid down a strong foundation and paved the way for sharing ideas, information, knowledge and addressing issues of common interest and concern in order to strengthen Asia-Europe Partnership.
6. ASEP Parliamentarians renew their commitment to the principles laid out in the United Nations Charter according to which all Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state and that the parties to any dispute shall seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice.

**a. Economic and financial governance structures**

7. ASEP Parliamentarians acknowledged that European and Asian economies and financial markets have become more integrated and inter-dependent.
8. As stated in Brussels in 2010, ASEP Parliamentarians encouraged more effective regional and sub-regional integration among ASEM countries, in compliance with WTO rules and commitments and regional declarations also through regional development banks, regional free trade agreements and regional monetary and financial integration initiatives, within the framework of a coordinated and efficient global response to the current crisis.

9. ASEP Parliamentarians affirmed the commitment to achieving a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading and financial system that contributes to growth, sustainable development and employment generation in all sectors, and recognized that regional free trade agreements should contribute and be complementary to the goals of the multilateral trading system.
10. ASEP Parliamentarians also underlined the need for regional and sub-regional institutions to focus on the specific needs of the groups they represent while promoting a more equitable representation of developing countries.
11. Moreover, ASEP Parliamentarians supported G20 initiatives on the reform of the international financial architecture aimed at removing the hindrances which prevent actors from effectively addressing the economic crises and fostering international economic recovery.
12. ASEP Parliamentarians stressed the importance of self-reliant fiscal efforts by each country, and enhanced cooperation between Asia and Europe to avert dramatic crises and ensure the sustainable and peaceful development of both regions.
13. ASEP Parliamentarians underlined the importance of introducing policies aimed at promoting a sustainable global economic growth and promoting trade and investments flows in the two regions, combating unemployment and supporting inclusive economic growth both in Asia and in Europe.
14. ASEP Parliamentarians strongly supported the various initiatives that countries in the two regions have embarked on. They expressed confidence that the early implementation of these efforts would bring about mutual benefits and stronger economic growth.
15. ASEP Parliamentarians expressed their concern for the increase of poverty and social exclusion, due to the economic crisis. For this reason they reiterated, as already affirmed in previous ASEP final declarations, that development programmes should be pro-growth, pro-employment, pro-environment and against poverty. As direct representatives of citizens in the countries involved, ASEP Parliamentarians stressed the importance of ensuring that

economic growth benefits all, through the inclusion of societal groups that are at a disadvantage in participating in the labour market, such as women and young people, persons with disabilities, indigenous people and local communities, as well as the protection of foreign workers within their national boundaries.

16. ASEP Parliamentarians stressed the need of creating a regulatory business-friendly environment aimed at supporting social businesses, microcredit, availability, accessibility and affordability of all to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as effective tools to introduce new business models capable of producing positive social results efficiently and cost-effectively.

17. ASEP Parliamentarians believe that pursuing greater equality, understood as economic and social empowerment of people, can provide strong leverage for sustainable development so as to prevent dramatic situations of social conflict and the emergence of severe violence phenomena.

18. Recalling Brussels Declaration, ASEP Parliamentarians reiterated their call for development co-operation to be strengthened through new and additional financial resources as well as through Official Development Assistance (ODA) in the bilateral and multilateral frameworks, in order to address the social dimension of development in developing countries. ASEP Parliamentarians called on developed countries to make concrete efforts towards the target of 0,7% of their Gross National Income (GNI) for ODA, provided that international bodies exercise stricter control on the use of these funds.

19. ASEP Parliamentarians stressed the fundamental importance of strengthening the role of parliaments within current international economic governance mechanisms, so as to make them more transparent, accountable and capable of meeting citizens' needs. ASEP Parliamentarians reaffirmed the commitment expressed in the Vientiane declaration towards strengthening parliamentary oversight over governments' fiscal and monetary policies, financial market governance and government budget expenditures.

20. ASEP Parliamentarians agreed that it is absolutely necessary to study measures, to expand inter-regional cooperation and to combat

unemployment, notably youth unemployment, through appropriate socio-economic policies which could include education and skill developments policies, incentives to enterprises and exchanges of best practices and experiences.

### **b. Sustainable growth and food security**

21. ASEP Parliamentarians expressed their concerns about food security as a complex sustainable development issue to be addressed globally.
22. ASEP Parliamentarians believe that sustainable development should be pursued in its three established dimensions: social, economic and environmental in a balanced and mutually reinforcing way.
23. ASEP parliamentarians encourage the participation of the private sector and the involvement of civil society in the design and implementation of environmental protection measures, in order to ensure that these measures contribute to changing attitudes and bringing about sustainable production and consumption patterns.
24. ASEP Parliamentarians also stressed the importance of agriculture which remains the largest employment sector in most developing countries, and that international agriculture agreements are crucial to ensure food security and nutrition at national, regional and global levels. To this end, ASEP Parliamentarians reiterated the importance to act and to urgently address climate change including working towards an effective global agreement on climate change in 2015, given its considerable negative impact on agriculture and population in order to ensure sustainable growth.
25. ASEP Parliamentarians reiterated that eradicating extreme poverty, hunger and reducing malnutrition, both undernourishment and overnutrition, are issues of common concern. In this connection, the results obtained in the course of implementation of the Millennium Development Goals are laid as a solid foundation for our future efforts to reduce extreme poverty and ensuring food security. In this respect, the Post-2015 Development Agenda, whose definition is in a turning point, should reinforce the commitment of the international

community to poverty eradication and sustainable development, complete the unfinished business and respond to new challenges (UNGA RES A/RES/68/6).

26. ASEP Parliamentarians insisted on pushing for the exchange of best practices of European and Asian experiences of sustainable place-based development of agriculture and food systems, with special regard to the role of small- farming agriculture, of small and medium-scale entrepreneurs and of inclusive, multilevel and coherent policies especially at local level. In this regard, a particular focus should be given to family farming and the role of women and young people. Attention should be paid to the protection of geographical indications.

27. ASEP Parliamentarians supported a comprehensive approach to the entire cycle of food production and consumption. In this perspective a balanced ecosystem - based on halting and reversing land degradation and biodiversity loss, including in crop production - must be pursued to protect the health of living beings, ensuring that the long-term guardianship of the landscape as a result of human activity on earth plays a crucial role and also taking into account the local consumption behaviour.

28. ASEP Parliamentarians emphasised the crucial importance of a rational and equitable use of water for human and agricultural purposes since water management represents one of the most difficult challenges to the survival of humankind in the near future.

29. ASEP parliamentarians underlined the important role of clean technologies (cleantech) as a cross-cutting element for enhancing competitiveness and promoting sustainable development.

30. In this regard, they emphasized the need to integrate water resource management in economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. ASEP Parliamentarians agreed on the importance of sharing experience and knowledge on integrated water resources management.

31. ASEP Parliamentarians called on the FAO and other related UN agencies, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to help accelerate the attainment of these goals.

32. In the search for a global solution, ASEP Parliamentarians will closely cooperate to pursue food security policies supported by appropriate responsible investments.

33. ASEP Parliamentarians encouraged the Governments of ASEM countries, international institutions and the private sector to step up joint efforts to increase food production and improve productivity through greater responsible investment.

34. ASEP Parliamentarians congratulated Italy on its decision to devote EXPO Milano 2015 to the theme of Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life. They supported the idea of a comprehensive approach to the problems of food security, nutrition and the resources of our planet. They looked forward to EXPO 2015 as a major world forum for debate on these issues, addressing all dimensions of the theme. They attached high priority to reconciling the respect for traditional cultural values and the planet's biodiversity with the use of new technologies.

### **Developing the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership**

35. ASEP Parliamentarians underscored their support for deepening mutual trust and understanding, as well as fostering multifaceted cooperation between Asian and European countries. They underlined the need for promoting peace, stability and security, which should be equal, transparent, inclusive and indivisible.

36. ASEP Parliamentarians stressed the role of ASEM as an important platform to promote mutual dialogue, cooperation and exchanges between Europe and Asia, and underlined the importance of the ASEM process for achieving better understanding between our regions through reinforced political, economic, socio-cultural and educational cooperation. In this perspective they emphasized the link between parliaments of Asia and Europe and ASEM and reaffirmed the importance of the parliamentary contribution that ASEP makes to the ASEM process and in particular to Summit Meetings. ASEP Parliamentarians also called for greater efforts to promote intercultural understanding among ASEM partners and in

this regard commended the contribution of the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF).

37. ASEP Parliamentarians underlined the importance of developing activities enhancing both ASEP and ASEM continuity and visibility and involving more civil society organisations and the media.

38. ASEP Parliamentarians reiterated the importance of ASEAN in the evolving regional architecture in East Asia and appreciated ASEAN's role as the driving force for its important contribution to promoting dialogue and cooperation for peace, security, stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. ASEP Parliamentarians welcomed the interest of the EU in furthering engagement with the region through all ASEAN-led processes.

### **Final Clauses**

39. ASEP Parliamentarians fully supported key ASEM Activities carried out by respective ASEM Partners, in particular the European Union and the Government of the Italian Republic in preparing the 10th ASEM Summit to be held in Milan on 16-17 October 2014, under the theme "*Responsible Partnership for Sustainable Growth and Security*" which will further strengthen ASEM cooperation and partnership.

40. ASEP Parliamentarians expressed their sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Italian Parliament for its warm welcome and cordial hospitality.

41. ASEP Parliamentarians agreed that ASEP9 Meeting will be held in Mongolia, and looked forward to the 2016 gathering.

*Rome, 7 October 2014*

\*The delegation of the European Parliament abstained from voting on paragraph 38. After the Declaration was adopted, the delegation of the European Parliament expressed reservations about paragraph 38 (as amended) of the Declaration in which the phrase "*including through the possible future EU's participation in the East Asia Summit*" had been deleted.