



ASEM DIALOGUE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CONCEPT PAPER

ASEM SEMINAR ON STRENGTHENING CONCERTED ACTIONS ON WATER MANAGEMENT THROUGH POST-2015 AGENDA

(Ben Tre City, Viet Nam, 4 – 5 June 2015)

BACKGROUND:

At the Rio+20, Leaders around the world recognized the importance of water in sustainable development and the Post-2015 Development Agenda by clearly emphasizing that “*water is at the core of sustainable development*” given its fundamental role to address critical issues such as health, the environment, climate change, energy and food security, and to contribute to poverty eradication and sustainable development in general.

However, current pressures on water resources have increased dramatically over the past decades due to growing population, rapid urbanization, lack of safe water and adequate sanitation, changing climate, inadequate water for agriculture and industry, pollution... The recent 2015 World Economic Forum Global Risk Report rates water crisis as the highest societal risk at least for the next decade.

According to the UN, notwithstanding the great achievements in meeting the MDGs target on drinking water, about 750 million people, mostly in rural and poor areas, still lack access to an improved drinking water source. Water withdrawals have tripled over the last 50 years and the demand for water is estimated to increase by 55% by 2050. In 2030, half of the world population will be living in high water stressed areas if current consumption patterns continue. This increasing stress on water resources puts hundreds of millions of people under the risk of hunger, diseases, energy shortage and poverty. Also demands on water for energy, cooling, extraction and production will be more than double by 2030.

As such, a global vision and worldwide commitment is consequently needed in order to tackle the world's current and emerging water problems. Sustainable water resources management should be given a prominent role in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. In addition, for the human needs of clean water and sanitation to be fulfilled, issues of over-exploitation of freshwater resources, the growing water pollution problems worldwide and water-related risks should be taken into account in a post-2015 vision with a view to achieving global sustainable development.

At the 10th ASEM Summit in Milan in 2014, Leaders committed to stimulating tangible cooperation between Asia and Europe in water-related issues, reaffirming ASEM's engagement to bi-regional cooperation between the Danube and Mekong regions, as a model in transforming the shared challenges related to food, water and energy security into opportunities for inclusive growth and sustainable development.

“*The ASEM Seminar on Strengthening Concerted Actions on Water Management through Post-2015 Agenda*” responds directly to the commitment of the ASEM Leaders. The Seminar is the annual fourth event under the “ASEM Dialogue on sustainable development” framework initiated in 2011 and endorsed by the 9th ASEM Summit. This is also the second seminar that Viet Nam hosts with the co-sponsorship of Bulgaria, Hungary, Lao PDR, Romania, Slovakia, and Thailand. Following the three previous successful Seminars in Budapest in 2012, Can Tho in 2013 and

Tulcea in 2014, this Seminar provides a platform for ASEM members to validate best practices in water management and consolidate proposals for ASEM's Post-2015 Vision and stronger actions to achieve sustainable water for all.

OBJECTIVES:

- To foster ASEM cooperation on water resources management as a contribution of Asia – Europe members to the common efforts to achieve sustainable and inclusive growth.
- To accord high priority to and to allocate appropriate resources to sustainable water management at all levels to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and working towards the Post-2015 Development Agenda.
- To enhance regional and inter-regional collaboration on sharing best practices and experiences as well as dissemination of technology and innovation to address water-related challenges, which contribute to improving riparian livelihood, getting better adaptation to future climate change and natural disasters.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

- Policy recommendations and outcomes of the Seminar are expected to be reflected in the Chair's Statement of the 12th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting in November 2015, the 5th ASEM Environment Ministers' Meeting in 2016 and the 12th ASEM Summit in 2016.
- New approaches to be made to enhance trans-boundary and inter-regional cooperation on integrated water management as one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), contributing to the implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.
- A shift from a sectoral approach towards a comprehensive one, including an examination of the ASEM Post-2015 Vision on water-related issues which captures the interconnections between water and other sectors such as food, energy, health, environment, economics, etc

CO-SPONSORS: Bulgaria, the European Union, Hungary, Lao PDR, Romania, Slovakia, Thailand and Viet Nam.

PARTICIPANTS: The Seminar will gather approximately 180 participants, including government officials, public policymakers, researchers, scholars, business circles and representatives from related regional and international institutions as well as social organizations from ASEM members.

COST: Organizing costs will be covered by the host. Participants are kindly requested to cover their own travelling and accommodation expenses.

Co-sponsors will be responsible for sending chairs/speakers to the Seminar, giving comments on the concept paper, provisional agenda and the tentative program as well as coordinating with the host in inviting the guest speakers. Any contributions either in cash or in-kind, on a voluntary basis, are most welcome.

LANGUAGE: The working language will be in English.

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