

(Provisional translation)

Celebrating the “ASEM Day”
-Dialogue and Future for Asia and Europe-

1 March 2017

On 1 March 1996, the first Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Summit was held in Bangkok, Thailand and, last year, the ASEM marked its 20th year since its inception. At the 11th ASEM Summit held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia in July 2016, it was agreed by the Heads of member States / Organisations to designate 1 March as the “ASEM Day” and today, I am very glad to celebrate that day for the first time.

Consisting of 51 countries and 2 international organisations from Asia and Europe, the ASEM conducts various activities for further strengthening the cooperation between the two regions, based on mutual respect and equality. The ASEM, where Asian and European member countries together representing around 60% of the world GDP, population and the amount of trade, bears big potential for the future. It is also an irreplaceable forum which allows us to further enhance the relationship between the two regions. Japan will hold up high the fundamental values widely shared by States, such as the democracy, rule of law and free trade, and continue to take active roles in the ASEM so that the forum will raise its competence in tackling the common challenges the international community faces.

Shall we take a moment to think and imagine about Asia and Europe 20 years later. It will be the year of 2037 when this year’s new born will become an adult of 20 years old. Taking advantage of this occasion of commemorating the foundation of the ASEM Day, I kindly invite the Japanese young generation to wonder about and picture the future of Asia and Europe. It would be my sincere wish to see further progress on mutual understanding, people-to-people exchange and cooperation among the two regions this year.

Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan
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