

**Congratulatory Remarks by Honorable Chung Eui-yong,**  
**Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea, at High-Level Policy**  
**Dialogue to Commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of ASEM, in Hanoi on**  
**June 22, 2021**

Excellencies, and Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am greatly honored to take part in today's High-Level Policy Dialogue, and very happy to be back in Hanoi. I thank and congratulate Minister Bui Thanh Son and the government of Viet Nam, for hosting this dialogue amid the COVID-19 pandemic. This meeting takes place at a critical moment to assess the achievements made by ASEM during the past quarter century and map out a vision going forward. I have no doubt that today's dialogue will contribute to the successful outcome of the 13th ASEM Summit in Cambodia this November.

**(25 years of ASEM and Korea-ASEM relations)**

In 1996, ASEM was established with 26 partners to cultivate the missing link between Europe and Asia. The number of partners has since doubled after many enlargements. ASEM has now become the largest trans-regional body in the world.

It is continuously fostering cooperation between Asia and Europe based on various pillars. The Republic of Korea has proudly been a part of this journey

from the very beginning, and had the honor of hosting the third ASEM Summit in year 2000 in Seoul.

Since ASEM's launch, we have witnessed the emergence of many trends whose causes, impacts and possible solutions do not stop at national borders: explosion of information technology, growing inequality, increasing risk of climate change tipping beyond the point of no return, and of course, the increasing vulnerability of our human species to infectious diseases.

What they all have in common is that they are a result of our quest to improve our way of life, but also that their negative consequences cannot be solved by any country for themselves. The only true solution lies in all countries working together in solidarity.

ASEM is relevant in this regard. It brings together the two continents that have been the champions of multilateralism. It has also demonstrated through its forums and many agreements that discussions and actions can be taken to tackle these global challenges. I would like to briefly mention some of those challenges that we are facing and discussing today.

### **(Post COVID-19 Recovery)**

While we still grapple with the social and human cost of the suffering inflicted directly by the COVID-19, perhaps an even more damaging impact may be the economic inequalities and the deprivation exacerbated by our response to it. Therefore, the post COVID-19 socio-economic recovery should be an inclusive one, at the heart of which lies protecting vulnerable social groups.

I expect the "Phnom Penh Statement on the Post-COVID-19 Socio-Economic Recovery" to be adopted during the upcoming 13th ASEM meeting,

will serve as a guideline for the ASEM members in their efforts to recover from the consequences of the pandemic and move to a more inclusive, sustainable and greener world.

The addition of sustainability and climate resilience as goals in the socio-economic recovery is because we all recognize the unique opportunity of a world-wide economic intervention by governments to spur growth to be steered in a way that can mitigate the effects of climate change.

My government launched a comprehensive recovery package called the “Green New Deal” under which significant investments in climate-friendly programs will also spur economic growth. The European Union is also pushing ahead with the European Green Deal and trying to build back greener from the COVID-19. As we all share this vision of green growth, I believe there is much to be shared and learned from among our members.

### **(Climate Change)**

Speaking of climate change, the international community is increasingly feeling the urgency to act now in order to keep global temperatures from rising beyond a point in which our planet could find itself in irreversible danger.

This year, the Republic of Korea will release its further enhanced 2030 NDC target by COP26 in November, aligned with efforts to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions no later than 2050.

We will also end all public financing for new overseas coal-fired power plants, and no permits will be issued for building new domestic coal power plants while shutting down ten aged units earlier than scheduled.

In addition, by 2050, we will significantly increase climate- and green-related

ODA programs to help developing countries in need of green recovery.

### **(Connectivity)**

It has been said that COVID-19 has exposed the weakest link in our societies. For most of us, that weakness was the physical inter-connectedness that had allowed the social cohesion and economic exchange that had driven our society's development and growth.

When our strength became a weakness, we were forced to transform our connectivity from the physical to the virtual. Although that digital transition has been nothing short of astounding, there is still much to be done to further enhance that connectivity. Some issues revolve around digital development while others emphasize the bridging of the "digital divide", to make sure that this transformation is not another avenue to widen the gap between developed and developing countries.

In particular, connectivity in health and information sharing is essential in the fight against the COVID-19 and infectious diseases to come. By strengthening digital connectivity, we can overcome physical limitations. Recently, many countries have been making active efforts to strengthen connectivity between Asia and Europe. We appreciate that the European Union released the Joint Communication on Connecting Europe and Asia on the occasion of ASEM 12 in 2018, and hosted the Europe-Asia Connectivity Forum in 2019.

### **(Multilateralism)**

All of these issues that I mention today, coordinating a green economic recovery, formulating a global commitment to tackle climate change, and

furthering the connectivity within our societies, can only be successfully dealt with all countries working together in solidarity. No one country can dictate nor shoulder the solution on its own.

Multilateralism is a must, not an option. ASEM provides that example as platform for strengthening multilateralism. ASEM members have engaged in open dialogues concerning these various global issues. Our collective commitment to multilateralism remains firm, leading to collaborations in tackling common challenges.

The value of ASEM is that it also provides the forum for consensus building even if it does not produce its own agreement. In the case of climate change, 24 ASEM member states and the European Union worked together to produce the Seoul Declaration adopted at the P4G Summit last month.

Moreover, the G7 Summit held two weeks ago in the United Kingdom also served as an opportunity to reaffirm the importance of multilateralism. I hope that the upcoming COP26 to be held in Glasgow will be an occasion where ASEM member countries will agree on other urgent matters being discussed also within ASEM.

Over the last few years, we have witnessed weakening multilateralism, and the COVID-19 has added to the challenges. As a staunch supporter of multilateralism, we hope that ASEM will continue to be conducive to strengthening multilateralism.