

## **Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)**

The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) was established as a dialogue forum in 1996 with 26 partners to bridge Asia and Europe. Over the last 20 years, its membership has expanded to 53, commensurate with the growing weight of Asia and Europe in the global economy and increase in regional and global interdependence. Its 53 partners include 51 member countries and 2 regional organisations (ASEAN Secretariat and European Commission). List of ASEM members may be seen at Annexure I.

2. ASEM represents around 62.3% of the world's population, 57.2% of the global GDP and almost 60% of the world's trade. Throughout its evolution, ASEM has maintained a consistent edge as a forum for political dialogue between member countries with diverse and complementing capacities. Interdependence, equal partnership, mutual respect and benefit, an open and evolutionary process and equal impetus to the three key dimensions of political dialogue, economic cooperation and socio-cultural cooperation are key principles in ASEM.

3. Although India had shown interest in joining the Group during the initial years of its formation, it did not happen, in part because of India's then limited engagement with ASEAN and also because India's quest for membership became entangled with disagreements over the inclusion of Australia, New Zealand and Pakistan. The 2<sup>nd</sup> ASEM expansion in 2006 saw India join the Forum w.e.f. January 1, 2007, together with the new EU members Bulgaria and Romania and new Asian members Pakistan, Mongolia and the ASEAN Secretariat. The 8<sup>th</sup> Summit in Belgium in October 2010 saw Australia, New Zealand and Russia join the group as a separate "3rd Category". The 9<sup>th</sup> ASEM Summit welcomed Bangladesh, Norway and Switzerland into ASEM. At the 10<sup>th</sup> ASEM Summit, Croatia and Kazakhstan were included as ASEM members from Europe and Asia respectively, taking the total membership to 53.

4. ASEM Summit Level meetings are held biennially. 10 ASEM Summits have been held so far. India's first Summit level participation was at the 7<sup>th</sup> Summit held in Beijing on 24-25 October 2008, where Prime Minister, Shri Manmohan Singh led the Indian delegation. The 8<sup>th</sup> ASEM Summit was held in Brussels on 4-5 October 2010 where Vice President, Shri Hamid Ansari led the Indian delegation. The Indian delegation was led by External Affairs Minister, Shri Salman Khurshid at the 9<sup>th</sup> ASEM Summit held in Vientiane, Lao PDR from 5-6 November 2012.

5. The last Summit (ASEM 10) was held on 16-17 October, 2014 in Milan, Italy. Minister of State for External Affairs, Gen (Dr.) V.K. Singh (Retd.) led the Indian delegation to the Summit. The Summit was hosted by the Prime Minister

of Italy and Chaired by the President of the European Council. It was attended by Heads of State/Government or high level representatives from all member countries/organizations. During the Summit, the leaders exchanged views on global economic and financial issues of common interest as well as traditional and non-traditional security challenges and agreed to strengthen ASEM's three pillars of cooperation, viz., political dialogue, economic cooperation and socio-cultural cooperation.

6. The 11<sup>th</sup> Summit is scheduled to be held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia on 15-16 July 2016. The theme for the Summit would be "20 years of ASEM: Partnership for Future through Connectivity". The 12<sup>th</sup> Summit will be held in Brussels, Belgium in 2018.

7. Apart from the biennial Summits, Meetings of Foreign Ministers, Ministers of Finance, Education, Culture and Transport, Mayors, Governors and Parliamentarians are also held regularly.

8. India hosted the 11<sup>th</sup> ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting (ASEM FMM11) in Delhi-NCR from 11-12 November 2013, which was inaugurated by the Vice President, Shri Hamid Ansari. The FMM marked the beginning of a new orientation for future ASEM meetings, as members agreed that the dynamism of ASEM should find expression in tangible result-oriented initiatives which could be utilized to define joint responses by Asia and Europe to global and regional challenges and also seize opportunities for growth and development. 12 areas were identified at ASEM FMM11 for tangible cooperation and multiple countries enrolled voluntarily for these. With the addition of 4 more areas subsequently at the 10<sup>th</sup> ASEM Summit and 3 more areas at the ASEM FMM12, there are today 19 identified areas of tangible cooperation.

9. The 12<sup>th</sup> ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting (ASEM FMM12) was held in Luxembourg from 5-6 November 2015. Minister of State for External Affairs, Gen (Dr.) V.K. Singh (Retd.) led the Indian delegation. The meeting was attended by Foreign Ministers/ Deputy Foreign Ministers of all ASEM partners. The theme of the meeting was "Working Together for a Sustainable and Secure Future". The 13<sup>th</sup> ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting (ASEM FMM13) would be held in Myanmar in 2017.

10. The 9<sup>th</sup> Asia Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting (ASEP9) was held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia from 21-23 April, 2016. Speaker of Lok Sabha, Smt. Sumitra Mahajan attended the inaugural dinner and the main meeting was attended by two Member of Parliaments. The 12<sup>th</sup> ASEM Finance Minister's Meeting was held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia from 09-10<sup>th</sup> June, 2016 where India was represented by Mr. Dinesh Sharma, Additional Secretary (Economic Affairs). The 7<sup>th</sup> ASEM Culture Ministers' Meeting was held in Gwangju, Republic of Korea from 22-24 June, 2016 where India was represented by Mr. Pankaj Rag, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Culture.

11. India is an active participant in ASEM. The following initiatives have been taken by India in the last two years under the areas identified for tangible cooperation:-

- (i) An ASEM Roundtable on “Energy Efficiency in Green Buildings” was organized by the Confederation of Indian Industry as part of the Green Building Congress 2014 on 5 September 2014 in Hyderabad. India also organized successfully the Second ASEM Roundtable on Green Building, along with CII in Gandhinagar, Gujarat on 20 November 2015.
- (ii) An ASEM Workshop on “Cooperation between Asia & Europe in Life Sciences, Pharmaceuticals, Biotechnology & Medical Devices Sector” was held on 20 November 2014 in New Delhi as part of Knowledgexpo-2014 in association with the Confederation of Indian Industry and Department of Biotechnology.
- (iii) A Roundtable on “Innovations in Technologies for Disaster Rescue Efforts amongst ASEM countries”, was held on 4-5 December 2014 in New Delhi in association with the Ministry of Home Affairs, the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM), National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), National Disaster Relief Force (NDRF) and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).
- (iv) A Workshop on “Towards Efficient & Sustainable Water Management through partnership amongst ASEM Countries” was held on 27 February 2015 in New Delhi as part of Water India-2015. Confederation of Indian Industry organized the event with the National Water Mission as knowledge partner.

12. India is a Member of the ASEM Working Group on Press and Public Awareness Management Strategy. As a member of this Working Group, India hosted a Foreign Policy Module for ASEM Diplomats on “Diplomacy and Foreign Policy- An Indian Perspective” from 9-13 March 2015 at the Foreign Service Institute, New Delhi. The second edition of the Foreign Policy Module for ASEM Diplomats was held from 13-17 June 2016 in New Delhi.

13. India also successfully hosted the 11th ASEM Customs Directors General/Commissioners meeting in Goa from 8-9 October 2015. The meeting was attended by the Heads of Customs Administrations and Senior Customs Officials from 40 ASEM member countries and the European Union. The World Customs Organisation was present as an observer. The meeting was chaired by Mr.Najib Shah, Chairman of the Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC), and adopted the ASEM 2016-2017 Action Plan in the form of the "Goa Declaration".

14. The Asia Europe Foundation (ASEF) is the only permanently established institution of ASEM. India regularly contributed US\$ 100,000 annually to ASEF since becoming a member of ASEM in 2007 till 2010 to support collaborative initiatives being undertaken by ASEF. Increased annual contribution of US\$ 120,000 is being made by India from 2011 onwards. India also made available Rs.22 lakhs (equivalent to US\$ 43,780/-) to ASEF for organizing the 9<sup>th</sup> ASEF's Journalists' Colloquium in New Delhi from 10-12 November 2013, on the sidelines of ASEM FMM11.

15. ASEF, in association with the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), organised a Conference/Training Programme in Delhi from 25-27 October 2014 under the "Asia-Europe Network of Urban Heritage for Sustainable Creative Economies" to share the processes and outcome of activities of the network in different parts of Asia and Europe.

16. The ASEM Expert Forum on Human Rights of Older Persons is scheduled to be held during 15-16 June, 2016 at Seoul, Republic of Korea and would be attended by Justice H.L. Dattu, Chairperson, NHRC.

17. The MEA in association with ASEF successfully held the 19<sup>th</sup> Summer University Project on "Sustainable Urbanization in Heritage Cities" from 9-21 August 2015 at Symbiosis International University, Pune. INTACH was the knowledge partner for the event. Students from more than 47 countries participated in this project, which was very well received.

18. The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of ASEM are being held in 2016. India is a Member of the ASEM Working Group on the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations". As a member of the Working Group, India hosted the ASEM Youth Dialogue on 26 March 2016 in New Delhi in partnership with Young Indians (Yi), an integral part of the Confederation of Indian Industry. The aim of the Youth Dialogue was to facilitate the building of networks between business and Industry in the ASEM region. Secretary (East) delivered the Keynote Address at the Dialogue. A Workshop on "Conservation Techniques & Instruments" in partnership with INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage) will be hosted by India from 20-21 October 2016 in New Delhi.

\*\*\*

July, 2016

## ASEM Members

1. ASEAN Secretariat	2. Australia	3. Austria
4. Bangladesh	5. Belgium	6. Brunei Darussalam
7. Bulgaria	8. Cambodia	9. China
10. Croatia	11. Cyprus	12. Czech Republic
13. Denmark	14. Estonia	15. European Union
16. Finland	17. France	18. Germany
19. Greece	20. Hungary	21. India
22. Indonesia	23. Ireland	24. Italy
25. Japan	26. Kazakhstan	27. Korea
28. Lao PDR	29. Latvia	30. Lithuania
31. Luxembourg	32. Malaysia	33. Malta
34. Mongolia	35. Myanmar	36. Netherlands
37. New Zealand	38. Norway	39. Pakistan
40. Philippines	41. Poland	42. Portugal
43. Romania	44. Russian Federation	45. Singapore
46. Slovakia	47. Slovenia	48. Spain
49. Sweden	50. Switzerland	51. Thailand
52. United Kingdom	53. Vietnam	