

**Herman Van Rompuy**  
**President of the European Council**  
**Speech at the Asia - Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting**  
**(ASEP 6)**  
**Monday 27 September 2010 - 9h00-10h00**

Monsieur le Président de la Chambre [Flahaut],

Mr Vice-chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee [Mr. Zhenzhong  
Nan],

Honorable Members of Parliaments in Europe and Asia,

Ladies & Gentlemen,

It is a privilege to say a few words at this occasion.

This meeting is very special: a parliamentary dialogue between the political representatives of the peoples of two continents. One may call it unique. As a former President of Parliament, I attach a particular attention to this motive.

You may be assured that as Chairman of next week's Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM), I am looking forward to your final conclusions, as a guidance to our work.

I also trust this meeting will prove a great vehicle to foster understanding between our peoples and our countries.

You will bring home from Brussels, to each of your countries, a deeper appreciation for the values and experiences of our partners.

I should also like to thank the host country, Belgium, for its excellent work.

As guests, you will discover a sort of mini-Europe in Belgium in any respects!

Ladies & Gentlemen,

The political relationship between our two continents is very old.

As old as our respective civilizations themselves.

But these relationships are ever evolving.

At this particular juncture of world history, when the pace of events seems to accelerate, there is a clear interest in Europe in recent evolutions in Asia.

- The strong economic performance in many Asian countries, which allowed hundreds of millions of people to get out of poverty.
- Interesting political developments, both internally and between countries.
- And we also notice a growing Asian self-confidence on the world stage.

We applaud these developments.

Since the launch of ASEM in 1996, Europe has changed as well.

The European Union now includes countries from both Western and Eastern Europe and it has become something like the political expression of the continent.

In the European Council, over which I preside, the 27 Heads of State and Government of the European Union have recently had a discussion on how to strengthen our relationship with Asia. This was on 16 September, less than two weeks ago.

We all agreed that, as a club of 27 Members, we need to work better together to make our voice heard internationally. We want to transform the EU's economic power -- as the biggest single market in the world, and producing 22 percent of world GDP -- into more political clout.

To the Members of the National Parliaments of the European Union and of the European Parliament here present, I therefore can confirm: the European Council wants to get more involved in foreign policy. We want to take up the task which the Lisbon Treaty gives to the European Council: "to identify the strategic interests and objectives" of the EU. To establish a shared sense of direction. To create synergies between the different actors in Brussels, and not least between the 27 capitals and Brussels.

The Heads of State and Government do not want just discussions on intentions, they want concrete results.

Let's take an example of a specific interest today: the exemplar collaboration between the European Union and some Asian countries in counter-piracy operations off the Somali coast. It is very promising and very concrete. Here in Brussels, we are close to the ports of Antwerp and Rotterdam; they are both about an hour's drive by car. These ports thrive on transport with Asia, on trade relations with big harbours such as Shanghai or Singapore, thousands of kilometres from here, but close to many of you.

Therefore, safeguarding the security of the Indian Ocean is about keeping open the trade roads between our two continents. Our businesses need to transport their goods. It is a pillar under globalisation. This anti-piracy operation is clearly of mutual benefit. It provides economic certainty. It also builds political trust.

For the EU, getting concrete results in foreign policy, means a change of perspective. It means going beyond the identification of

common principles and values, and improving our strategic thinking and acting at the global stage.

Defending our interests, maintaining reciprocity, trying to find mutual benefits.

To the Members of the Asian National Parliaments here present, I can say: we want to engage our Asian partners. We want to exchange views and work together more on issues like developing trade, restoring the global economy, fighting climate change, or strengthening security. Like in the example I just mentioned, to the mutual benefit for both sides.

I am glad to tell you that in that European Council meeting of 16 September, we also reached progress on two concrete points related to Asia.

Firstly, we were able to secure internal consensus on a Free Trade Agreement with **South-Korea**. This will stimulate economic growth and create jobs in both our regions. In view of the high level of regional integration of the Asian economies, I believe that this

Agreement with South-Korea will give a boost to economic relations between the European Union and Asian countries as well. It is a significant step forward.

Secondly, on **Pakistan**: the European Council wants to give maximum support to this country after it was so severely struck by devastating floods. More aid and more trade. We want Pakistan to recover now and to develop economically. We will grant significantly increased market access. We also agreed on commercial measures to help Pakistan after the disastrous floods.

Mesdames et messieurs,

Voici en quelques mots l'arrière-plan de votre rencontre de l'ASEP aujourd'hui et demain, et de notre rencontre de l'ASEM de la semaine prochaine.

Cette rencontre entre l'Europe et l'Asie est un élément dans la gouvernance mondiale.

D'autant plus forts les liens entre les parties, d'autant plus fort l'ensemble.

De ce point de vue, cette rencontre s'inscrit aussi dans un processus.

Nous sommes ces jours entre le Sommet de l'ONU sur les "Objectifs du Millénaire pour le Développement" (*Millennium Development Goals*) de fin septembre d'un côté, et le Sommet du G20 à Seoul ainsi que la rencontre à Cancùn de cet automne de l'autre côté.

Par rapport à l'aide au développement, l'Union européenne est la plus grande donateur dans le monde avec un montant de 49 milliards d'euro, le double de l'année 2000.

Le G20, quant à lui, il a bien travaillé en période de crise.

Maintenant il doit faire ces preuves dans l'après crise.

Pour la rencontre ASEM des Chefs d'Etat et de Gouvernement, nous aurons quatre priorités. Je suis heureux qu'elles sont partagées par vous ici.

La première priorité, c'est la **gouvernance économique et**



**financière mondiale.** Notre dernière rencontre, à Beijing en 2008, a eu lieu juste après le déclenchement de la crise financière. Deux ans plus tard, nous avons désormais tous retrouvé le chemin de la croissance. Nous pouvons nous en féliciter. Il nous reste toutefois à trouver des réponses structurelles pour prévenir qu'une telle crise puisse se reproduire. Dans ce domaine, nous avons tous des responsabilités

La deuxième priorité, c'est le **développement durable**. Dans cela, il y a le volet **développement**: pensons à un meilleur accès aux marchés, qui permettra d'accélérer l'adoption de techniques innovatrices. Puis il y a également le volet [**durabilité**], avant tout le changement climatique et nos efforts politiques pour prévenir des désastres écologiques. Nous avons été déçus des résultats du Sommet de Copenhague mais nous voulons continuer le travail dans un esprit positif. L'enjeu pour le genre humain est trop important. L'Union européenne fournira 7.2 milliards d'euro's de "fast start financing" dans les 3 ans à venir pour les pays les plus vulnérables, un tiers du montant total. La rencontre à Cancun sera

une étape importante à cet égard, à laquelle l'Union européenne se préparera avec soin.

En troisième lieu, nous parlerons d'un ensemble de sujets de **politique internationale et régionale.**

- La coopération dans le domaine de la sécurité et dans celui de l'assistance humanitaire en temps de crises.
- Les possibilités pour l'intégration régionale en Asie.
- L'importance de la démocratie et du respect pour les droits de l'homme.

Sur ces sujets, je ferai tout pour que nous puissions avoir un échange franc et fructueux. Dans mon expérience politique, la confiance est la seule base d'une vraie coopération. La confiance entre nos pays, et entre l'Europe et l'Asie.

En quatrième et dernier lieu, il s'agira **l'avenir de l'ASEM** elle-même. Nous accueillons cette année trois nouveaux membres: la Russie, l'Australie et la Nouvelle-Zélande. Je m'en réjouis. Nous demanderons à des hauts fonctionnaires de réfléchir à la question comment fonctionner à 48 membres, tout en gardant la flexibilité et

l'informalité qui seule peuvent construire cette confiance que nous recherchons.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Enhancing confidence and mutual trust between Europe and Asia, that is also the main underlying objective of this parliamentary meeting.

Our destinies are linked. The financial crisis proved it.

Climate change concerns us all.

I am confident that your proceedings will be in this spirit.

I should like to thank you again for the possibility to share a few thoughts with you and I wish you a fruitful meeting.