



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL  
THE PRESIDENT**

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***Under embargo, check against delivery***

**Closing remarks by  
President Herman VAN ROMPUY  
at the 8th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)**

Distinguished Heads of State and Government,  
Foreign Ministers,  
Ambassadors,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Friends,

We had two days of open dialogue on a wide range of global issues and developments in Asia and Europe. We may be pleased with what we achieved.

Our meeting is primarily about establishing channels of communication between our two continents, about making a movement in both directions. Seen from Asia's perspective, one makes a "Passage to Europe" -- travelling both physically and mentally. Seen from Europe's perspective, it is "Passage to Asia"... -- travelling maybe less far physical, but just as far in the mind! So I hope many of you will join us after our meeting for visit the exhibition "A Passage to Asia", about the enduring and rich relationship between the two continents.

After two days work, we can all feel encouraged by the common commitment between Europe and Asia to work together. We have reaffirmed the strategic dialogue between our two continents on the basis of equal partnership, mutual respect and benefit.

The attractiveness and potential of the Asia Europe Meeting is also indicated by the number of countries willing to join. I appreciated the contribution of the three new members who have recently joined our partnership.

**P R E S S**

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During our debate on global economic governance we have reaffirmed the need for a renewed collective effort to consolidate the economic recovery, still considered fragile. Everybody recognised that a great deal of work needs still to be done to reform our economies both internally and externally. Internally, we have to strengthen our investment in both human capital and new technologies, develop our social protection and adapt it to the needs of an aging population. On the global scale we need to focus our efforts on the reform of IMF and financial regulation. After two years of profound crisis the main road has been found, but a lot of critical points still need to be tackled.

With the adoption of the declaration “Towards more effective global economic governance”, we, as Leaders, have displayed the resolve and unity of Asia and Europe in pursuing the reform of financial markets and supervision, aimed at strengthening our financial institutions. This remains our number one priority.

In addition, we have sent clear signals on the modernisation of the international financial institutions. This process needs to take into account the realities of today’s world economy - the shifts that have taken place, and the strong growth in dynamic emerging markets and in developing economies. In parallel it needs to address wider governance issues as well. We have thus prepared an important issue for the upcoming G20 Summit in Seoul - having 12 of its members here present amongst us.

In preparing for Seoul and the further work plan under the incoming French G20 presidency, we agreed on the need to remain ambitious and to work with a sense of urgency to achieve the necessary reforms. The G20 should find its cruising speed, as it remains an important process in the post crisis era as well. Its outreach toward regional organisations was considered particularly useful.

Regarding Sustainable Development, we expressed our common political will to reaffirm the Beijing declaration as the basis of our work. Asia and Europe are developing a specific and peculiar model for sustainable development, based on the three pillars of economic development, social cohesion and environmental sustainability. These three pillars are mutually supportive and not in conflict with each other. On the contrary, they are highly interrelated.

We have reconfirmed our commitment to the Millennium Development Goals, and the particular need to address the problems of the least developed countries. We recognized that, despite ongoing efforts, progress towards timely implementation is hampered, partly because of the economic and financial crisis. We must stress the continued importance of narrowing the development gap between developed and developing countries, and take urgent remedial action. The question of innovative financing remains to be considered in achieving this goal. Our objectives would also be helped by reducing trade and investment barriers that hamper the spread of innovative technologies.

We have sent a strong message on the international negotiations on Biodiversity in Nagoya, and the important issue of climate change and the upcoming meeting in Cancun. We agreed on the importance of fast start financing, and mobilizing new and additional financial resources to address the needs of developing countries.

Our Summit has also expressed a renewed commitment and momentum to work toward the successful conclusion of the Doha Round negotiations, and encouraged the re-launching of the ASEM Economic and Trade Ministers’ Meetings.

Dear Friends,

We reiterated our strong determination to tackle a number of global issues of great concern to our populations. Let me mention one in particular, because it is both very concrete and symbolic – the fight against piracy.

We developed unprecedented cooperation between the European Union and a number of Asian countries in counter-piracy operations off the Somali coast. Safeguarding the security of trade routes between our two continents is not just a matter of high strategy, it is concrete, its benefits are easy to explain to our citizens. Simply put, our businesses need to transport their goods safely.

We had an open discussion on complex political and security questions. Security became a global issue - just think of food security, nuclear proliferation, humanitarian aid, or the combat against terrorism. I am certain that our direct dialogue, founded on mutual respect, has helped to improve the understanding of the different positions held by partners. To this regard I would like to stress the importance of the dialogue, among cultures and civilizations to combat extremism. I believe we still have to strengthen our collective ASEM agenda in this regard. Constructive dialogue is also the key word for addressing the regional problems and controversies mentioned in the Chair's statement.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

ASEM 8 was an excellent opportunity to further exchanges among European and Asian civil society representatives and leaders. ASEM 8 has not only lived in this magnificent Palace, but also in other parts of Brussels, where members of parliaments, business leaders and representatives of the civil society have been discussing. Their contribution enriched our work.

We all gratefully accept the offer from Lao to reconvene the ninth ASEM Summit, to be held in Vientiane, in late 2012, and I am wishing every success to Laos to that aim.  
I now declare ASEM 8 closed. Thank you all.

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