

Speech of H.E. Steven VANACKERE on the occasion of the 12th Asia Europe
Business Forum to be held in Brussels - 4 October 2010

Your Royal Highness, Prince Philip,
Minister LIM Hwee Hua,
President Leysen, Chairman Daems,
Chairman Jin Roy Ryu,
Your excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, allow me to welcome you in Brussels. Belgium is proud to host a groundbreaking meeting like the ASEM Summit. Not only is the ASEM Summit a highly prestigious event, it also offers a forum allowing both Asia and Europe to take their cooperation to a higher level. The ASEM allows unique interaction possibilities. Not only at the formal gatherings at the Royal Palace with Heads of State and Heads of Government present, but also at the events organized alongside the Summit, such as this 12th edition of the Asia Europe Business Forum where you, financial experts and businessmen from 43 ASEM-countries, will discuss the economic reality of today.

It shouldn't surprise anyone that this year's edition concentrates on the discussion of the financial services industry, and its opportunities and challenges Asia and Europe are facing.

This issue highly interests our political leaders who will discuss, tonight at the Summit, the economic and financial situation and perspectives. Tomorrow morning at breakfast, Heads of State and Heads of Government, and CEO's , will exchange views on the subject.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Global imbalances have triggered a near meltdown that could only be averted through a coordinated action from decision-making bodies, especially those of countries represented within the G20. The 7th ASEM Summit, held in Beijing in October 2008, was very instrumental in achieving the necessary level of consensus that allowed some first emergency measures to be taken during the G20 Summit a few weeks later. Since then a series of additional measures to stabilize financial markets were taken. The necessary fine-tuning was done recently by the so-called Basel III accord that will have an important impact on financial services and, more in particular, on banking. The upcoming G20 Summit, to be held in Seoul next month, should provide additional policy tools in order to further strengthen the Basel III rules. The world needs a framework that supports financial stability, albeit without stifling economic growth and innovation. An internationally consistent regulatory and supervisory framework, establishing a sound basis for the financial markets and the economy, is only a part of the answer to this fundamental crisis. Indeed, recent events in Europe show that financial stability isn't feasible without sustainable public finances. Also, the question of the accountability towards the economy, and society in general, of market players is crucial to a lot of citizens and needs to be addressed like all other issues. Public authorities have the moral duty to put the necessary regulations as swiftly as possible in place.

Another important aspect of your discussions will focus on the way ahead towards an integrated market for financial services. This would bring us more competitive and more dynamic economies. In any case, financial linkages between Asia and Europe need improvement. The conclusion of bilateral and regional Free Trade Agreements between us could provide the necessary steps forward. However, the world needs also the positive effects of an ambitious and

balanced multilateral trade agreement for its economic development. I sincerely hope that, after almost 10 years of negotiating, the Doha Round can be concluded in the near future, hopefully in 2011.

A couple of weeks ago, the 65th UN General Assembly in New York provided the opportunity for a Summit on the Millennium Development Goals. Economics is, in the first place, a question of growth and development. In order to be able to grow and to develop, we should support not only countries inside , but also countries outside of Europe and Asia in their quest for a stable and dynamic financial system. Asian and European best practices can inspire how to implement issues like micro-financing, proper financial policies towards SME's. or financing local authorities.

Without the presence of all of you today, and some of you have come a long way to exchange views on issues of shared interest between Asia and Europe, the 12th edition of the ASEM Business Forum can not be successful. I have high expectations that today's discussion, as well as the interaction between political and financial decision makers tomorrow morning; will provide new and useful insights. These insights should get us out of this crisis and help all countries to generate enough wealth to bring their population "quality of life" by creating a balanced and sustainable financial system we can fully depend on in the future.

Thank you very much