



## **Asia-Europe Meeting Summit of Heads of State and Government**

Bangkok, Thailand  
1-2 March 1996

### **Background**

The initiative for this Summit grew from the recognized need to strengthen the linkage between Asia and Europe. While the Trans-Pacific linkage appears to be strong through the [Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation \(APEC\)](#) as well as the Trans-Atlantic linkage through the G-7, ties between Asia and Europe have not been developed to its full potential. This historic Meeting should help strengthen this linkage as well as foster closer ties between the three main centres of economic growth namely, Asia, Europe and North America. Closer cooperation between these three regions will contribute significantly towards maintaining global peace, stability and prosperity.

The inaugural ASEM was envisaged as an informal gathering of leaders who will be free to discuss any topic of mutual interest. There is therefore no structured agenda as such. The significance of this Summit lies in the fact that 25 Heads of State and Government from Asia and Europe have come together to talk about a common vision for the future. Their collective presence reflects the joint political will and commitment to create a new foundation for closer and more productive relations between the two regions. It is for these reasons that the participating countries have agreed to the theme of "**Towards a New Asia-Europe Partnership for Greater Growth**" for this historic summit.

One of the aims of the ASEM is to provide the leaders with an opportunity to get to know one another. It is hoped that the ensuing close consultations will allow the leaders to build rapport. This will serve as a foundation for further and continued cooperation amongst the participating countries in more specific areas. Another aim of the Summit is to encourage greater understanding between the peoples of the two regions. Furthermore, this important gathering of Asian and European leaders provides a unique opportunity for the parties to explore new avenues of cooperation in the political, economic and social fields. The ASEM was expected to usher in a new era of closer friendship and cooperation between Asia and Europe built on shared interests and sustained through common understandings.

In the political area, the ASEM provides an opportunity for leaders to exchange views on current regional and global issues. These discussions could serve as a basis for further cooperation on specific issues of mutual interest. Issues which are expected to receive particular attention include reform of the United Nations, general disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. Consultations on political and security issues at the highest levels serve to generate greater trust and confidence amongst

the participating countries which should reinforce the existing ties of friendship between the two regions, thus contributing to global stability.

In the area of economic cooperation, the Summit sought to strengthen the economic relations between the two regions by taking advantage of existing complementarities and developing synergies which would promote greater economic growth and development. Promoting greater trade and investment between the two regions through trade and investment liberalization and facilitation amongst the participating countries is another important goal. These initiatives are intended to complement existing efforts to achieve an open, rules-based trading system within the framework of the World Trade Organization. Small and medium enterprises will likewise be given attention. In addition, the Meeting will encourage Asian and European business and private sectors to strengthen their cooperation through increased contact, joint ventures and transfer of technology.

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