

Opening Speech

by **H.E. Mr. PRAK Sokhonn**, Deputy Prime Minister,
Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of
Cambodia

At the High-Level Policy Dialogue “ASEM at 25: Strengthening Asia-Europe Partnership in a Transforming World”

Videoconference, 22 June 2021 at 1:30 PM Ha Noi Time

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. At the outset, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, particularly to **H.E. Mr. Bui Thanh Son**, Minister of Foreign Affairs, for organizing this High-Level Policy Dialogue. I would also like to extend my greetings to **H.E. Mr. Josep Borrell**, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Vice President of the European Commission **and to many colleagues FS/FMs from the UK, ROK, Singapore, Lao PDR**. I recognize the high turnout of ASEM SOM Leaders, Ambassadors, guest speakers, and participants today, which makes this event truly representative and auspicious when celebrating 25 years of ASEM works.
2. The ASEM process has come a long way indeed. Over the past 25 years, ASEM has proven to be an important platform, connecting Asia and Europe and promoting the partnership between the two continents. Just a glance at the statistics is revealing: for that matter, it is now the largest cooperation framework outside the United Nations, representing 60% of the global population, 55% of global trade, 65% of the global economy, and 75% of global tourism. With such a significant contribution, ASEM can exert a serious heft and has become part of multilateralism and global governance.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. Speaking about multilateralism, we must admit that it has been under mounting pressure over the past several years due to the rise of unilateralism, protectionism, and political populism. We have also witnessed the challenges of global governance with the ever-increasing geopolitical pressures. This is a call for all ASEM Partners to remain alert and pull all our efforts together to reinvigorate multilateralism for the sake of the future of Asia-Europe cooperation.
4. Truth be told, the COVID-19 pandemic is a case in point. It is a stark reminder that no country is safe unless every country is safe and that only through multilateralism and through multilateral organizations, like the WHO, could we hope to defeat this deadly scourge to mankind. Indeed, the same applies to other global issues like trade, for example. The WTO reform is necessary, but it requires a collective will and must ensure that it will lead to a reduction of inequalities between states and within states.
5. At this moment of an unprecedented global challenge, I am pleased that ASEM remains committed to these principles, as reflected in the ASEM Ministerial Statement on COVID-19, which was adopted last September. By the same token, I firmly believe that the theme of the ASEM13 Summit, “**Strengthening Multilateralism for Shared Growth**”, has proven to be more relevant than ever.

Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

6. What do we envision the future ASEM in the next 25 years be like?
7. Clearly, the pressure of population increase on urbanization and infrastructure, the scarcity of our

quickly depleting natural resources, the impact of global warming and other climate change effects, the Fourth and perhaps even the Fifth Industrial Revolution, the gradual shift to geo-political multi-polarity; all of these irreversible trends will challenge ASEM to be creative, to think “outside the box,” in its search for sustainable solutions.

8. ASEM’s commitment toward building a cohesive, competitive, resilient, and sustainable community for the peoples of Asia and Europe remains a top priority. Let me stress that European and Asian values are common values when the well-being of our people is our common goal.
9. In this connection, ASEM Leaders will have an opportunity to discuss a broad range of issues at the upcoming 13th ASEM Summit to showcase our steadfast engagement in tackling global and regional challenges.
10. I could foresee our collaborative works being focused on the distribution of vaccines, the creation of a conducive environment for economic recovery, and a systemic approach to re-open travel, amongst others. Moreover, the Summit will also provide a powerful platform for ASEM Leaders to reiterate their shared commitment to promoting peace and security, respect for diversity, and tolerance of different faith.
11. As the host country of the ASEM13, Cambodia is ready to welcome ASEM Leaders to Phnom Penh late this year, **25-26 November**, to be precise. The hosting of the Summit is the greatest opportunity for Cambodia to affirm, at the highest level, our commitment to strengthen the multilateral system, our contribution to the promotion of collective efforts to address global

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challenges, and our participation in exploring opportunities to revitalize the global economy.

12. On this positive note, I wish today's Dialogue a great success. Thank you.