

**Exploring a new partnership between the EU and
Asia for security, democracy, development and
growth**

**EUISS / GMF expert meeting on EU-US
cooperation in the Asia Pacific**

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The European Union's relations with Asia are defined by a tight net of bilateral and multilateral contacts. On the bilateral side, we have very close relations and partnerships, including with 4 of our "strategic partners". On the multilateral dimension, the EU and Asian countries have defined their partnership notably through the Asia-Europe Meeting of Heads of State and Government (ASEM) and the ASEAN framework.

The Asian region has undergone impressive changes in recent years. A growing number of countries play a major role in world economy. Developments in Asia impact on world-wide security and growth and a vast array of global issues including climate change.

Let me briefly develop the main tenets of our current and future action.

EU interests and policy in Asia

The EU's main foreign policy objectives are the promotion of global security and stability, human rights and democracy and sustainable development.

EU's security and stability is dependent on increased security and stability in Asia. Our understanding of security calls for a multi-dimensional approach based on multilateral cooperation and comprehensive regional security arrangements.

Just to give some examples of our involvement, I would like to recall the EU's ongoing contribution to international efforts in Afghanistan, or the EU's support to reconciliation processes in Aceh (Indonesia), where the EU deployed an operation, and in the Philippines. The EU stands ready now to support ethnic peace processes in Myanmar and help overcome boundary and resources tensions across the wider region. It is a testimony to the role we played, that the EU has been invited to play a role on a number of occasions.

Bilateral cooperation in the field of crisis management with Asian countries has opened new paths of co-operation. EU missions are indeed open to participants from non-EU countries. Some Asian countries are major contributors to UN peace keeping missions.

Let me now to refer to issues related to non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy, outer space and the non proliferation of conventional weapons. Increased military spending in many Asian nations and a number of ongoing ethnic conflicts and border disputes place co-operation with Asia at the top of EU priorities when promoting initiatives such as the Arms Trade Treaty or the code of conduct for objects placed in outer-space. 5 of the world's 9 acknowledged nuclear powers share the Asian continent. Others are also active players there.

Another issue of great concern to the EU and many Asian trading nations is counter-piracy. The innovative and

comprehensive approach adopted off the coast of Somalia with the operation Atalanta has helped raise awareness on the development of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy.

Response to natural disasters is another issue of close co-operation between the EU and Asia. Many Asian nations are located in disaster prone areas with high concentration of population. The EU's experience in this field can be useful to partners: we have therefore engaged in a dialogue with ASEAN as well as with other Asian nations bilaterally to help enhance its disaster management and prevention capacities.

Also in the area of security and stability, the EU is launching important dialogues with many Asian countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Indonesia on counterterrorism and de-radicalization.

Reinforcement of democracy and promotion of human rights through the rule of law is another central element of EU international engagement. The EU offers its support to those countries which have engaged in the path of democratization such as Myanmar, Afghanistan or Nepal and to those which want their democratic credentials reconfirmed such as Bangladesh or Pakistan. The pacing and implementation of our support to democracy must be carefully tailored to the country's needs and to its particular political and social context. This is at the basis of EU engagement with ASEAN and its Member States.

The fact that the EU is perceived as a main promoter of democracy and respect for human rights world-wide, and that its assistance is actively requested should be seen as a success of EU foreign policy.

As regards to another key tenet of EU policy, sustainable development and climate change let me tell you that the EU will continue to allocate important funds to development in Asia. The current total is over 1bn per year allocated to Asia, all instruments combined and concentrated on the poorest countries. Still today 2/3 of the world's poor, more than 1bn people are located in Asia.

EU's efforts aimed at sustainable development, curbing emissions and developing a global green economy require full engagement with Asian nations. The EU's goal at next week's Rio+20 Conference is to propose an approach that would lead to less competition for resources, and underpin sustainable development and energy security.

As regards **trade and growth** and despite the current economic context, the EU and the US continue to be main players. Asia has clear predominance as regards growth rates and there is no doubt that the expansion of Asian markets provides the EU with a great opportunity to re-launch its economy through the development of a network of free trade agreements Asia-wide.

EU engagement in Asia

The intensity of the EU's relations with Asia is conducted through three main mutually reinforcing channels: bilateral agreements, regional engagement and global fora.

On the bilateral front, the EU is extending its network of "new generation" **framework agreements** with Asian nations. Most of these take the form of "**Partnership and Cooperation Agreements**". PCA or Framework Agreement negotiations have been concluded with Indonesia, Mongolia, the Philippines, South Korea, and Vietnam and have been launched with China, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. With Afghanistan, Brunei and New Zealand they are beginning or are announced

The purpose of these agreements is to develop a comprehensive approach, based on mutual interests, combining the political as well as the sectoral aspects of the relationship. With the Treaty of Lisbon, there is an interest to restructure the dialogues around a more political and effective format. These new generation agreements are seen as a "door" to Free Trade Agreements, to which they are formally linked.

Regionally, the EU has a major interest in pursuing its cooperation agenda with Asian regional structures in order to enhance their capacity and to promote a **collaborative regional approach**. In this context, ASEAN occupies a key position.

ASEAN has been successful in developing the embryo of a pan-Asian security structure which offers an outstanding platform for dialogue. High Representative Ashton will participate at the next Asian Regional Forum in July. On the other side, the EU still has to be invited to join the East Asia Summit and the Defence Ministers +. Efforts to achieve this are underway.

Support to the further strengthening of ASEAN is therefore a key EU goal, not only for the sake of the development of, and cooperation within its Member States, but also in view of ASEAN's wider role as a factor of stability in Asia. This is reflected in the action plan adopted in the last EU-ASEAN ministerial.

The ASEM summit level meetings organized every two years constitute an important rendez-vous for Asian and European leaders to develop a shared understanding of challenges and ways of addressing them. The 9th ASEM is scheduled to take place next November in Vientiane and Presidents Barroso and Van Rompuy are scheduled to attend.

Globally, the EU remains committed to multilateralism and to seek greater policy coherence between goals pursued at bilateral and regional levels and those promoted at the UN.

Cooperation with partners

Finally, let me turn to the co-operation of the EU with other international actors including the US on Asia. Obviously, EU policy with Asia is based on interaction with other major players which have a stake in Asia's development and security including Australia, Gulf Cooperation Council, South America, Russia and the US.

With respect to the US, our interests in terms of promotion of democracy, human rights, development and stability largely coincide and so it is normal for the EU and the US to discuss questions of common interest in Asia. The EU is committed to the region, and its multi-dimensional, non-military approach, can contribute to a broader vision of security, which encompasses elements of our “soft power” such as trade and development.

The EU's goal should be to encourage the development of pan-Asian security systems based on a common perception of challenges.

These are just few markers which might guide your work today.

The "Look East, Act East" project by the EUISS fits well with our present preoccupation. As you will deal with the three important domains of security, economy and trade, and global and regional governance, I am looking forward

to the answers you will identify once the project is finished because you are asking the right questions. We need to be able to identify the scope for EU action, based on an assessment of member states' interests, finding complementarities to underpin the EU's aspiration to be an actor in the region. We need to be clear on the means at our disposal and on the added-value of EU action. And we need to identify what forms of cooperation with international partners need be established to achieve our goals.

Thank you!