

Asia Europe Environment Forum (ENVforum)
Asia-Europe Strategies for Earth Summit 2012

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Asian and European experts offer ideas to UN on sustainable development

The United Nations must agree upon fundamental reforms at the “Rio+20” Summit in June next year. The leaders of the Asia-Europe Meeting are encouraged to attend and help secure a renewed global commitment to sustainable development. On 1st November, the Asia-Europe Environment Forum (ENVforum) communicated these and other recommendations in a submission to the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development “idea box”, open to position papers and proposals from governments, international organisations and non-government organisations.

Over 55 Asian and European experts were convened by the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), with its co-partners in the Asia-Europe Environment Forum (ENVforum) in July and October. They have generated scenarios and recommendations over a global institutional framework for achieving sustainable development goals.

“The need for fundamental change to strengthen the international sustainable development architecture is now stronger than ever,” according to Ella Antonio, President of the Earth Council Asia-Pacific, who participated throughout the process.

The ENVforum report sketches a possible blueprint for an international Sustainable Development Council. It emphasises horizontal integration through a central body for sustainable development coordination and coherence, possibly spearheaded by a UN High Commissioner for Sustainable Development. “The envisioned Sustainable Development Council must address the infirmities of the current set up. In Rio, only genuine political will can create the constitutional and legal support necessary in the process of change,” added Ella Antonio. Suggestions were also made to develop a scheme of supportive mechanisms at regional and national levels, which take existing good practices in Asia and Europe into account.

The report also suggests ways of advancing public participation and access to information. “Sustainable development cannot happen in secret - commitments made by governments to the principles of good governance in Rio 20 years ago have to be renewed, monitored and reported upon,” said fellow participant David Banisar, Senior Legal Counsel of the non-governmental organisation Article 19. The report posits that civil society participation must be assured at all levels, putting forward the idea of an accountability framework to better govern representation.

Around 327 organisations representing major groups contributed to the UN “idea box”, together with 47 governments and 42 intergovernmental bodies. These submissions will form the basis of a declaration of decisions at the “Rio+20” Summit. The ENVforum had already presented an earlier version of its report to the High-Level Dialogue on the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development organised by the Indonesian government and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs last July in Solo, Indonesia.

The ENVforum is a partnership consisting of the Asia-Europe Foundation, the Hanns Seidel Foundation, the Swedish Environmental Secretariat for Asia, and the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme, and with financial contribution from the European Union.

ENVforum report:

<http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/index.php?page=view&type=510&nr=407&menu=20>

More information about the project:

<http://www.asef.org/index.php/projects/themes/environment/1998-strategies-for-the-earth-summit-2012->

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About the Organisation:



The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) promotes greater mutual understanding between Asia and Europe through intellectual, cultural and people-to-people exchanges. Through ASEF, civil society concerns are included as a vital component of deliberations of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM*). ASEF was established in February 1997 by the participating governments of ASEM and has since implemented over 500 projects, engaging over 15,000 direct participants as well as reaching out to a much wider audience in Asia and Europe. www.asef.org

* ASEM now brings together 46 member states (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Indonesia, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Laos, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom, Vietnam) plus the European Commission and the ASEAN Secretariat. www.aseminfoboard.org