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Civil societies bring recommendations to ASEM leaders

Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) decided on Sunday to bring new civil societies' recommendations to leaders of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM).

Around 150 experts from Asian and European countries gathered in Brussels from October 1 to 3 for the 4th Connecting Civil Societies of Asia and Europe Conference, a three-day meeting organized by the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), the only permanent institution of the ASEM, to make sure the voice of civil societies from the two regions are heard during the forthcoming summit.

During the conference, experts came up with recommendations to be addressed to ASEM leaders, who will meet in Brussels on October 4 and 5 to discuss regional and global issues.

Regarding the higher education issue, the conference participants suggested governments should provide support to ensure continuity, quality, diversity and access to education. Authorities should also facilitate the autonomy of higher education institutions and define strategies responding the needs and expectations of people involved in education.

Concerning skills and competencies, experts recommended to develop, maintain, and update skills and competencies, but also to promote cooperation, redesign education activities and strengthen civil societies through life-long learning.

According to participants who discussed the sustainable creative cities question, the art of city-making should embrace ecological growth and governance. They also underlined the need to integrate art in urban development process and include artists in consultative bodies on education policies.

After debating the role of youth in health promotion, experts suggested to promote inter-regional knowledge sharing, to give more weight to young people in policy and promotion of public health, and also to encourage social entrepreneurship in this field.

On the issue regarding regional community building, participants recommended the setting-up of an independent commission to discuss historical recognition, the creation of an exchange dialogue between Asian countries, and the organization of the collection and formulation of historical and current examples in order to strengthen regional stability and trust-building.

Participants also called on authorities to adopt and implement national right to information legislations, to extend commitments to international treaties and conventions, to ensure citizens' access to information regarding negotiations leading to treaties and agreements, and require international institutions to adopt transparency policies.

On inter-regionalism and regional integration, experts recommended that authorities should facilitate dialogue, knowledge sharing, cooperation and understanding between actors such as civil societies organizations, higher education and think tanks through better mobilization, exchanges and participation of civil societies in the ASEM process.

The ASEM, which was launched in 1996, is an informal process of dialogue and co-operation bringing together the 27 European Union Member States and the European Commission with 16 Asian countries and the Association of South-East Asia Nations (ASEAN) Secretariat.

Source: Xinhua