



Asia-Europe forum on post-conflict Aceh and Northern Ireland give insider views on peace-building

Tuesday 15th May, Singapore—Have decades of bloody inter-communal and secessionist conflict in two different contexts, 12,000 kilometres apart, finally found lasting peace? A panel of experts on the two conflicts will provide an unprecedented opportunity to understand how peace may be achievable—even sustained and irreversible—with lessons that could have an impact on persistent hotspots and on-going peace processes in the world such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo and Timor-Leste. The Asia-Europe Roundtable panel **“Negotiating an Irreversible End to Conflict: Are the Peace Agreements in Aceh and Northern Ireland Sustainable?”** will take place at the International Conference Centre in Singapore at 6pm on 23rd May (Wednesday).

The panel will be moderated by **John Chalmers** of Reuters, composed of three speakers on the Aceh case, and three on the Northern Ireland case. **Sami Lahdensuo**, who heads the Crisis Management Initiative, will contribute insights into CMI’s role in the mediation of negotiations that resulted in the Helsinki agreement and the end of armed conflict in Aceh. **Munawar Liza Zainal**, the Mayor of Sabang City in Aceh and Deputy Spokesperson of the former Free Aceh Movement (GAM), will speak on the demilitarization of the GAM through the Aceh elections as well as current governance and reconstruction efforts. **Pieter Feith**, who oversaw the European Union-led Aceh Monitoring Mission, remains optimistic on his return to the region after five months: “The reintegration of former GAM combatants must continue. Most important of course, is that the peace process is on track.” On Northern Ireland, **Senator Maurice Hayes** (Seanad Eireann member) will provide insights into the process which led to the inaugural government launched on 8th May. Former chairman of the International Fund for Ireland **Willie McCarter** will comment on the economic impetus, particularly trade and investment directed at cross-community projects, which sustained momentum for peace. Prof. **Radha Kumar** of the Mandela Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution in Delhi will share insights on how the political solution in Northern Ireland may provide valuable lessons for conflicts in other contexts.

The panel is open to the public and enquiries can be directed to the Asia-Europe Foundation.

The panel on Aceh and Northern Ireland is part of the 5th Asia-Europe Roundtable which will run on the 24th-25th May at the Asia-Europe Foundation with 40 invited eminent individuals and experts such as Ambassador **Sastrohandoyo Wiryono** of the Jakarta-based Center for Strategic and International Studies, **Michael Vatikiotis** from the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, former Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Timor-Leste (East Timor) **Sukehiro Hasegawa**, former Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) **Soeren Jessen-Petersen**, among other experts on the Balkans, Cambodia, Afghanistan and post-conflict reconstruction in general.

The panel and 5th Asia-Europe Roundtable is a joint effort of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Office for Regional Cooperation in Southeast Asia and the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF).

Programme Contact:

Ms Sol Iglesias Tel: (65) 6874 9707, Fax: (65) 6872 1207 E-mail: sol.iglesias@asef.org

Ms Natalia Figge Tel: (65) 6874 9710, Fax: (65) 6872 1207 E-mail: natalia@asef.org

Press Contacts:

Ms Soh Lai Yee, Tel: (65) 6874 9729, Fax: (65) 6872 1206 Email: laiyee@asef.org

Ms Leda Bontosoglou, Tel: (65) 6874 9739, Fax: (65) 6872 1206 Email: leda.bonto@asef.org



The **Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)** seeks to promote better mutual understanding and closer cooperation between the people of Asia and Europe through greater intellectual, cultural, and people-to-people exchanges. These exchanges include conferences, lecture tours, workshops, seminars and the use of web-based platforms. The major achievement of ASEF is the establishment of permanent bi-regional networks focussed on areas and issues that help to strengthen Asia-Europe relations.

Established in February 1997 by the partners of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), ASEF reports to a board of governors representing the ASEM partners. ASEF is the only permanent physical institution of the ASEM process. Having completed over 310 projects, involving over 13,500 individuals ('ASEF Alumni'), ASEF works in partnership with other public institutions and civil society actors to ensure its work is broad-based and balanced among the partner countries. <http://www.asef.org>

* **The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)** is an informal process of dialogue and cooperation. It brings together Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Laos, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Myanmar, The Netherlands, The Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom, Vietnam, and the European Commission. From 2007, ASEM includes Bulgaria, Romania, India, Pakistan, Mongolia, and ASEAN Secretariat.



Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) Office for Regional Cooperation in Southeast Asia

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) was founded in 1925 as a political legacy of Germany's first democratically elected president, Friedrich Ebert. Since the beginning of the foundation's work in South, Southeast and East Asia the focus has been the promotion of democracy and the strengthening of the social dimension of economic development. In the past few years, the international dialogue within Asia as well as between Asia and Europe, and the issue of crisis prevention have gained important stakes in the work of the foundation. In its work the

foundation co-operates with a number of governmental institutions, trade unions, political parties, social movements, NGOs, media and scientific institutions, as well as international organizations.

The role of the Office for Regional Co-operation in Southeast Asia based in Singapore is to support the social dimension of Southeast and East Asian co-operation and integration, the Asia-Europe dialogue and partnership activities in the ASEAN member states Cambodia and Laos where there are no FES offices. The office's activities include dialogue programmes, international and regional conferences (e.g. on economic and social policy, regional integration and comprehensive security), Asia-Europe exchanges, research, as well as programmes with trade unions.

ABOUT THE ASIA-EUROPE ROUNDTABLE

The Asia-Europe Roundtable (AER) is a series of fora that aims to examine Asia-Europe experiences and cooperation in tackling common challenges such in region-building and conflict management. The inaugural AER was launched in 2000 to have a broad overview of the transition in the two regions. The 2nd AER focused on the issue of global and regional governance and transnational problem-solving. The roundtable shifted from broader regional issues to a more specific focus on peace and security. The 3rd AER in Hanoi (2003) and the 4th AER in Berlin (2005) deepened bi-regional dialogue and promoted networking in the areas of conflict prevention as well as peace and reconciliation. Advancing from this work, the 5th AER will focus on "Sustaining Peace through Post-Conflict Reconstruction".