Remarks by Ambassador Zhang Xiaokang at The Opening Ceremony of the ASEM Seminar on Sustainable Management of Water Resources in the Context of Urbanization

Changsha, Hunan, 22 May 2014

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to attend this important and meaningful event. First of all, on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I would like to thank Hunan Provincial Government, Asia Europe Foundation and ASEM Water Resource Research and Development Center for the tremendous efforts they have made in making this seminar possible.

As the ASEM Senior Official for China, I welcome all the colleagues and friends from the ASEM family. I'm glad to see here a diverse representation from governments, academia and business community which shows the importance of our topic today and our shared interests in water management and urbanization. I look forward to your active participation and valuable inputs in making the Seminar a rewarding experience for us all.

Since its inception 18 years ago, ASEM has served as a unique platform for dialogue and cooperation on myriad fronts to forge a new comprehensive partnership between Asia and Europe. Over the years, ASEM has seen its relevance increased and its size almost doubled.

At the same time, there are growing expectations and demands on
ASEM to carry out and carry forward result-oriented initiatives and projects that could define joint responses to global and regional challenges. It's a compelling necessity and our shared responsibility to take action to make ASEM responsive to all these expectations from the people through more committed actions.

Our action should start from areas most closely related to people's livelihood. Some of such areas identified by ASEM in recent years include but not limited to urbanization, sustainable water management, energy conservation and environment protection, new energy, technology innovation, information technology, youth employment, public health, education and human resources development, etc. To achieve progress, ASEM has formed core groups of members to push for cooperation in specific fields, so as to have results delivered in time. It's a right way to go.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Water is the source of life. Sustainable water management has been identified as a priority area of cooperation at both the 9th ASEM Summit and the 11th ASEM Foreign Ministers' meeting. As many countries in Asia and Europe are striving to advance industrialization and urbanization, they are increasingly confronted with issues like safe drinking water, water conservation and water cycle, management of aquatic-eco systems, and urban waterlogging prevention and control. On the other hand, quiet a few countries in ASEM have accumulated a wealth of experience in sustainable management of urban water and developing water-eco-friendly cities. I believe this is why our discussions and exchanges today are not only possible but also necessary. All in all, this Seminar is of realistic significance.
I would like to take this opportunity to thank ASEF as our cooperation partner. As the only permanently established institution of ASEM, ASEF has a big role to play in carrying forward the cooperation in a wide range of fields.

China is a strong supporter and active participant of the ASEM process and one of the major donors of ASEF. Since 2012, China has raised its financial contribution to ASEF and set up a China Trust Fund to ASEF with the purpose to encourage cooperation in the field of sustainable development. This seminar will be the first project supported by the Fund. In the second half of this year we will be hosting together with ASEF two more projects, a seminar on food security and a workshop on public health care. We look forward to active participation from ASEM members in these projects.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We hope this seminar is a warm-up for joint concrete actions to seek real solutions for the common challenges faced by ASEM countries. We can make and could only make it together.

Thank you.