

Chair's Statement¹

"Youth Diplomacy: A New Generation of International Relations Between Asia & Europe"

1. The Model ASEM Spin-off Malta 2019 conference was held on 2-4 August 2019 in Valletta, Malta. Under the theme *"Youth Diplomacy: A New Generation of International Relations Between Asia & Europe"* 28 delegates from 18 ASEM Partner countries attended the conference. Model ASEM is a political simulation of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) where youth participants are invited to role-play their respective ASEM Partners' positions and negotiate a consensus-based Chair's Statement. At the Model ASEM Spin-off Malta 2019 conference, participants simulated the role of ASEM Foreign Ministers at the 14th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting (ASEMFMM14).
2. United in the belief in the strengths of cultural diversity and transcontinental prospects for peace and stability, the Model ASEM Ministers raised areas of major concern on Asia-Europe relations and cooperation in accordance with this year's theme *"Youth Diplomacy: A New Generation of International Relations Between Asia & Europe"*. These were organised across 3 thematic areas, in order to comprehensively promote the coordination of policies across Asia and Europe.
3. Ministers emphasised the variations in definitions of the term *"youth"*. As the ASEM Process entrusts its partners to choose and apply their own definition for the term, the paragraphs in this Chair's Statement may refer to approaches, strategies, and applications that do not necessarily resonate with all ASEM Partners' definitions. Even though terminology varies among ASEM Partners, each paragraph of the Chair's Statement carries a distinct message for which a common definition is not necessary. Programmes of the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), which carries out youth programmes on behalf of the ASEM Process, defines youth as individuals between the ages of 18 to 30.
4. Ministers stressed the importance of upholding a rules-based multilateral order. Ministers highlighted that multilateralism constitutes a framework for youth across ASEM Partners, to engage in international affairs. Towards a better future for the youth, Ministers reaffirmed the continuous joint actions to counter corruption and promote transparency in the spirit of global governance.
5. Ministers acknowledged that this year marks the 5th anniversary of the unanimous adoption of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), by which the world leaders ambitiously committed to end poverty, address inequalities and tackle climate change. The 17 SDGs and 169 targets are well balanced and enable ASEM Partners to pursue sustainable development across all 3 pillars of sustainability: Environment, Economic and Social. The Ministers noted with satisfaction that the 13th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting (ASEMFMM13) Chair's Statement committed to *"Strengthen Partnership for Peace and Sustainable Development"*.

¹ As Model ASEM is a simulation-based project, the points listed in this Chair's Statement do not necessarily correspond with the positions of the organisers or the youth participants.

6. Ministers reiterated the relevance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the youth's engagement in politics. Similarly, Ministers welcomed the UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2419 on youth as a good force for peace, as a follow-up to the UNSC Resolution 2250 on youth, peace and security. In the light of these international commitments, Ministers acknowledged the role of National Youth Councils and advisory bodies on youth policies. Ministers highlighted the significant role of youth volunteers having common goals beyond national borders, and thus the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide an excellent platform to accommodate their motivations. Ministers recognised the need to expand public funding for those from underprivileged communities. Ministers acknowledged to take into account the priorities and interests of the host country regarding funding, selection criteria, expected outcomes and destinations of volunteer programmes, whilst keeping in mind the internationally agreed upon principles of non-discrimination and ASEM values. Ministers recognised the need to review and, if needed, improve certain international volunteer programmes to have an optimised impact which can partially be carried out by providing policy-related free courses on human rights and digital capacities with a strong emphasis on youth active citizenship.
7. Ministers emphasised the severe threat caused by climate change across a global scale and reiterated their commitment to the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, calling for the endorsement of the Paris Agreement by ASEM Partners. Ministers affirmed that climate change is a crucial issue of national and global security, and welcomed youth participation in creating policies that safeguard the environment. They stressed the need to fund, educate and connect young people in a global network to combat climate change through initiatives that promote green jobs, renewable energy, and recycling programmes.
8. Realising the importance of the Blue Economy in Asia and Europe, Ministers stressed that ASEM Partner countries' ocean-friendly agenda should take into account the interests, concerns, and consequences for the youth. These considerations should particularly be made in the areas of, but not limited to, fisheries, tourism, mineral extraction, port development, renewable energy, maritime security, hydrocarbons, maritime professionalism and coastal landscape.
9. Ministers highlighted the necessity and importance of promoting interregional economic partnership between Asia and Europe. They underscored the social repercussions unemployment, which severely affects young people as they transit from education to the workplace environment. Ministers committed to creating opportunities and youth initiatives to support and empower young people, hence encouraging capacity-building among nations based on the foundation of young entrepreneurship.
10. Ministers acknowledged the capability of technologies and media tools in fostering youth participation, and the connectivity it provides between young people, and between the youth and the governments of the ASEM Partners. Ministers highlighted the importance of ASEM Partners implementing active measures in cyber security and legislations against online falsehoods. Ministers affirmed the necessity and significance of a digital platform for young Asians and Europeans. In this regard, they recognised the need to ensure safe cyberspace, achieved through counter-cyberterrorism programmes, age-limited education on cyberspace, combating online radicalisation and bullying causing suicide, enhancement of cybersecurity, and protection of digital rights.

11. Ministers shared the view that human rights serve as the precondition for safe connectivity. In regard to human-to-human connectivity, they stressed the importance of cultural, educational, and youth exchanges as well as people-to-people contacts. Ministers noted the existing ASEM DUO fellowships, in Korea, Singapore, Thailand, India, Sweden and Belgium, as well as the Erasmus+ programme, and called for the enlargement of similar fellowships in other ASEM Partner countries. In the light of connectivity and mobility, ministers also recognised the urgency of civic education, the facilitation of young entrepreneurs into the labour market, and exchange of scientific research to combat health issues, including, but not limited to, mental health issues. In addition, they stressed migrants' rights to education and reiterated the commitment to protect migrant students' rights.
12. Ministers underscored that it's essential to raise awareness that all young people deserve equal opportunities to participate and exert influence, no matter the social condition or culture they come from. Ministers shared the view that they would effectively utilise digital connectivity in enhancing close social and economic ties between youth in Asia and Europe. Ministers reiterated the important role of the ASEM Trans Eurasia Information Network (TEIN) played as a platform for enhancing such connectivity and for innovative growth, as agreed upon at the 13th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting (ASEMFMM13) in Nay Pyi Daw, Myanmar in 2017. Ministers committed to increasing funding to initiatives, such as the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), and to promote youth education as well as awareness about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through innovative digital programmes, such as online platforms to enhance the youth's skills for future employment in both regions.
13. As youth are active on a global labour market, Ministers acknowledged a common ambition to standardise qualifications to universities across Asia and Europe. In addition, they called for common objectives and standards for both higher education degrees and short-term exchanges, as well as educational opportunities for all youth on the principle of non-discrimination, with regards to the less represented or marginalised groups thereby highlighting ASEM values, including but not limited to gender equality.
14. Ministers encouraged efforts to provide platforms for youth from every ASEM Partner country to meet and participate in dialogue on a separate yet parallel basis with the ASEM Process, to ensure access for youth to decision-making processes. Ministers recognised the Asia-Europe Foundation's (ASEF) education framework as an indispensable platform which connects people of Asia and Europe, particularly youth. The Ministers urged for youth exchange platforms to promote ASEM values.
15. Ministers advised the constitution of ASEM youth coordination efforts, which will operate as a liaison between several national youth organisations within each ASEM Partner country, to conduct discussions on policies based on united and neutral themes. The work should be run by youth for the purpose of representing the opinions of the youth demographic on matters of policy. If necessary, these efforts can work towards events or initiatives dedicated to youth empowerment within the ASEM values and beliefs.
16. Ministers recognised the importance of engaging in national research about the main traits and experiences of youth, in order to enhance the reality of youth engagement. This would help to discern which mechanisms are to be started in order to facilitate the engagement of youth in the decision-making processes. Should the need arise where an ASEM Partner is not in position to conduct said efforts, they are empowered to call upon the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) to aid in these efforts on their behalf. The information revealed within this research is to be used or published at any ASEM Partner's own discretion, be it to ensure

that its' youth remains suitably heard, or be it to signify the need for an external offer of resources to those ASEM Partners who may not be in a position to assist themselves.

17. Ministers called for the formulation of a common strategy on combating apathy among youth, to enhance democracy and empower young people through active citizenship. Ministers noted the lack of funding for youth activities and the limited awareness among youth of many opportunities. Ministers urged for early interventions for youth engagement through the inclusion of education in youth participation. Furthermore, Ministers encouraged the provision of training to teach youth critical thinking skills that would be useful in their future endeavours and engagement in decision-making processes. These training outlets could include voluntary civic retreats, as well as mental and physical training.
18. Ministers recognised the importance of youth involvement in voting processes. Ministers advised ASEM Partners to both educate and inform youth on voting rights.
19. Ministers emphasised the need to improve connectivity among ASEM youth networks to foster active and intercultural connections. Ministers welcomed the initiatives undertaken by the Asia-Europe Foundation's (ASEF) in the area of youth development and fostering an environment of cultural diversity. Ministers urged ASEM Partners to provide technical assistance to those ASEM Partners in need, particularly students in primary and secondary schools in developing countries, and increase funding for the Asia-Europe Foundation's (ASEF) and youth networks in order to cover the increasing expenses.
20. Ministers acknowledged that streamlined visa processes between Asia and Europe can facilitate intercultural exchange programmes for the youth and hence recognised the importance of revising their consular policies.
21. Ministers expressed their sincere gratitude to all Model ASEM Spin-off Malta 2019 conference organisers: the Malta Model United Nations Society (MaltMUN), the Malta University Students' Council (KSU) and the Maltese National Youth Council (KNŻ), as well as the supporters: the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) and the University of Malta, for organising this educational project, and the host country Malta for its strong political support as well as the remarkable hospitality extended to all participants throughout their time in Valletta.