



European Council
The President

PRESS
EN

REMARKS
EUCO
PRESSE
PR PCE
Milan, 17 October 2014

**Press statement by the President of the European Council,
Herman Van Rompuy
following the 10th ASEM Summit -
Milan 16-17 October**

Let me start by thanking Prime Minister Renzi and all his team wholeheartedly for hosting the 10th ASEM Summit in Milan. Italy has done a wonderful job.

We have just concluded our Summit - a major gathering of Asian and European leaders that occurs every second year. With more than 50 leaders in Milan and two new countries, Croatia and Kazakhstan joining, ASEM is showing its significance.

We are meeting in challenging times. Europe is working hard to overcome one of its most serious crisis in decades. We deepened the Economic and Monetary Union. The European Union is actively engaged in re-gaining economic growth and jobs based on private and public investment. At the same time, the European security environment has undergone profound changes. The conflict in Ukraine has not yet found a political solution. And in our Southern borders instability pervades across the Middle East, extending into Northern Africa and the Sahel.

Our Asian partners are also confronted with challenges of their own, for some linked to the opening up their economies and societies or to the search of solutions to regional disputes. Both regions also face global challenges, such as climate change and are affected by non-traditional threats including extremism and terrorism. In such circumstances our bi-regional partnership, expressed here today in the shape of the ASEM Summit, becomes more relevant than ever. And we have seen this in our sessions.

Connectivity, linking our countries and our continents through means of transportation, but also through all means of communication, in particular digital communication, has been at the heart of our exchanges. It is about bringing our societies, our companies closer together, facilitating trade and investment, promoting the exchange of ideas and transfer of information and knowledge. We will all become more spiritually and materially prosperous through these exchanges. A number of important initiatives are underway. We have to encourage synergies. Europe needs Asia's growth to jump-start its economy. Asia needs European markets, investment, technology.

Beyond national reforms, we agreed to fight protectionist measures and address restrictions to trade, in particular non-tariff barriers. We have re-committed to doing this at multilateral level, notably by redoubling efforts within the WTO. In addition, the European Union continues to promote free trade through a web of bilateral and regional agreements. Many of these are in Asia.

This essential interdependence requires that Europe and Asia unite in addressing global challenges as well. We have discussed the two major events that will mark next year's international calendar: the Paris Conference on Climate Change and the agreement on the new post-2015 sustainable development agenda. These are opportunities we cannot miss. Our future, including the survival of many developing countries, is at stake. We all share responsibilities. We will continue working with Asian partners in the run-up to these events to ensure that we achieve tangible results. This is what we have agreed to.

We have also reviewed our respective regional situations and risks that threaten security in our continents. The retreat session was particularly useful in this respect. Many referred as well to the importance of ensuring respect for human rights and democratic freedoms. While there are different perspectives within ASEM partners, I believe we all agreed that only through dialogue, cooperation and respect for international law will we be able to find solutions, bringing peace and stability.

Non-traditional security threats, in particular health pandemics such as Ebola, occupied part of our discussions. Deep concerns were expressed about violent extremism and terrorism. We must further unite forces in fighting these scourges that threaten all countries. The European Union will engage decidedly with countries interested in cooperation.

Finally, in the margins of ASEM, President Barroso and I participated this morning in a meeting with Presidents Putin and Poroshenko, together with the leaders of Italy, Germany, France and the United Kingdom. We agreed on the need to bring back peace and stability to Eastern Ukraine. To this effect it is essential that we ensure implementation of the Minsk agreements, in particular as regards the cease fire, border control and the holding of elections. The keyword was implementation, implementation, implementation. More encounters will take place this afternoon in the search for concrete progress on these issues.

The Tenth ASEM summit has been very productive. The process continues and implementing all our commitments already represents a challenge of a high order. I have no doubt that ASEM's next chair will contribute to driving our efforts forward with energy and wisdom. I congratulate Mongolia on hosting the 20th anniversary of ASEM in 2016 and I wish to assure President Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj of the European Union's full support. Thank you.
