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**Remarks by the President of the European Council,
Herman Van Rompuy
at the closing ceremony of the 10th ASEM Summit**

This summit started by welcoming two new countries into ASEM: Croatia and Kazakhstan. We are happy to have them among us.

This positive start has been followed by substantial discussions on many important issues over the last two days. We have reviewed achievements and challenges in the three key areas of economic, political and socio-cultural cooperation.

'Connectivity' has been a key concept and a unifying thread throughout our discussions. The free flow of goods, investment, information and people is key for our economic growth and prosperity. The need to improve transport links has been particularly highlighted; our strong trade relations should get even stronger thanks to improved infrastructures. Also, in this 21st century, digital connectivity is a key area for trade as much as for any future development.

Different initiatives are underway in these domains. We need to pursue them further and ensure they mutually reinforce each other. A prosperous Asian economy will contribute to a healthier European economy and vice versa.

Future development is also dependent on quality education, which fosters innovation and employment and thereby contributes to economic growth. Cooperation in this key area is also an investment in our joint development through cross-fertilisation of ideas and better mutual understanding. These issues will be further developed by the respective Ministers at the ASEM Culture Ministerial next week in Rotterdam, the Netherlands and by the Education Ministerial in April in Riga, Latvia.

We have exchanged views on global matters, and on challenges that we should confront together. Our encounter followed in the footsteps of high-level meetings on these issues such as the UN conferences on Small Island Developing States and on climate change. We have continued the groundwork in preparation of a hopefully ambitious agreement in Paris on the reduction of greenhouse gases.

We have also reaffirmed our commitment to fight hunger and poverty worldwide: the EU will remain the world's biggest donor and many Asian countries have lifted large parts of their own population out of poverty. We need to continue working together towards a meaningful post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

We spoke about fundamental values, sharing our belief that human rights should be protected and promoted in all our countries. Our cooperation in this field is increasing and the upcoming ASEM Human Rights Seminar in November in Hanoi, Vietnam, will provide an opportunity for more detailed discussions.

There are unfortunately many threats to security and we have reviewed a wide array of these challenges: food and water security, energy security, traditional and non-traditional security. We have also had candid discussions on regional security, in particular on the current areas of instability at our doorsteps. We have agreed on the need to resolve conflicts peacefully and in respect of international law. Only through cooperation and mutual understanding can we reach true and lasting security.

Finally, we took a look at how ASEM itself, the framework for our cooperation should develop. We welcomed the valuable inputs by the three ASEM fora: parliamentary, business and civil society. They widen the scope of our relationship beyond governments, to include representatives of our citizens and other private actors.

This is the third time that I am participating in an ASEM Summit, and unfortunately the last one. So while I express my optimism about the future development of our partnership after this fruitful meeting, let me also take advantage of this opportunity to bid farewell to you. I have met many of you over the last years, together with the President of the European Commission, either in Brussels or in your countries. I have enjoyed your friendship and hospitality.

And speaking of hospitality, I would like to congratulate Prime Minister Renzi for the flawless organisation of the Summit and thank him personally, as well as all his collaborators. Your untiring efforts and generosity have ensured a most successful encounter.

We are now looking forward to celebrating the 20th anniversary of ASEM at the 11th Summit that will be hosted by Mongolia in 2016.

Before I hand over the floor to the incoming ASEM host of 2016, let me present to President Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj a symbol of EU – Asia cooperation and friendship. I wish the government and the people of Mongolia the best of success in the preparation of this special anniversary summit.

Let me give the final word to President Elbegdorj to invite you all to his wonderful country.
