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Perspectives and Priorities for the ASEM Process

## Perspectives and Priorities for the ASEM Process

### Executive Summary

The success of the inaugural Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in Bangkok, and the subsequent rapid evolution in most fields of follow-up, have seen the ASEM process get off to a running start. With barely a year to go before the next summit in London, it is high time for the EU to take stock of developments so far and to consider goals and priorities for ASEM II and beyond. The object of this working paper is to give the Commission's contribution to such a discussion.

As stated in the Commission's communication of January 1996, the ASEM process can not be seen as a substitute for other bilateral and multilateral fora linking Asia and Europe. ASEM should primarily function as a political catalyst for achieving mutual understanding and enhanced awareness through dialogue. The key characteristics of the ASEM process include its informal nature, its high-level participation and its multi-dimensionality, and it is these which will define the added value which ASEM can offer, and on which its unique potential for reinforcing Asia-Europe links will be based.

The ASEM process, promoting understanding and the development of consensus through dialogue, and leading through to cooperation in the identification of priorities for concerted and supportive action, is ideally placed to promote effectively the interests of the two regions. In the political field, the enhancement of mutual understanding will help us promote common interests in global fora, as well as permitting the exploration of otherwise sensitive topics in a spirit of equality and mutual respect. In the economic field, concrete results in trade and investment can be obtained through concerted action, even if the specific commitments made would be formalized in other specialised fora. And in the social and cultural dimension, the high-level focus provided by ASEM will help greatly in establishing a climate for enhanced mutual awareness.

In preparing for the second ASEM in London, it will be essential to devise a simple framework programme for the effective prioritisation and coordination of official follow-up activities. Such a framework programme should set out in general terms an overall work programme based on clear strategic priorities for the coming two years, and establish a simple mechanism by which proposed initiatives would be reviewed and endorsed. If a framework of this kind could be adopted by the London Summit, this would help greatly in providing for a focused, consistent and well-managed follow-up. One suggestion by the Commission is that any new proposal for official ASEM follow-up actions should be considered at the Coordinators' and Senior Officials' level before being put forward for agreement at a higher level, and that such new proposals should be circulated to all partners at least six weeks before a Senior Officials' Meeting. Longer-term perspectives for ASEM can be addressed in the proposed Vision Group, which will report to ASEM Foreign Ministers in 1999 and to the third ASEM summit in Seoul in the year 2000.

The Commission would suggest that the key priorities to be established in London should include the following:

**in the political field:**

- intensifying the high-level political dialogue, which should in any case move forward substantively at the Luxembourg SOM in October this year.
- taking forward the already agreed dialogue on UN reform;
- promoting informal political dialogues on regional and international issues, including economic, environmental and other non-military aspects of security, disarmament and humanitarian issues such as anti-personnel land-mines, as well as dialogue on common rules of conduct that ensure the proper functioning of international society;

**in the economic field:**

- further dialogue in the Senior Officials Meeting on Trade and Investment (SOMTI) on how Asia and Europe can best promote global trade liberalisation within the WTO;
- implementation of the Trade Facilitation Action Plan (TFAP) and Investment Promotion Action Plan (IPAP), both of which should be formally adopted in London;
- consolidation of the business dialogue, emphasising the central role of the Asia-Europe Business Forum (AEBF);
- intensified cooperation in the field of customs;

**In the social and cultural field :**

- the building of key networks, particularly among students, academics, scientists, and cultural personalities;
- improved dissemination of information to the public on ASEM and on the significance of closer Euro-Asian links;
- continued strong support for ASEM.

Finally, the success of the ASEM process has generated considerable interest and expectation among other countries in Asia and Europe, and it will therefore be important for ASEM partners to address the question of **enlargement**. From the Commission perspective, it will be essential to respect the special character of the Union within the ASEM process, and to retain the EU as the European core of ASEM. The current numerical imbalance between EU and Asian participation in ASEM would suggest that, if an enlargement takes place, it would logically involve Asian participation. Nevertheless, with 26 participants ASEM is already very diverse, and it will be essential that any enlargement should contribute to the strengthening of the ASEM process.

## Perspectives and Priorities for the ASEM Process

### 1) Introduction

The inaugural Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in Bangkok in March 1996 was heralded as a major success. The Heads of State and Government of 10 nations in Asia, and of the 15 Member States of the European Union together with the President of the European Commission, agreed to work together to create a new Asia-Europe partnership, to build a greater understanding between the peoples of both regions, and to establish a strengthened dialogue among equals.

The first ASEM took place at a time when Asians and Europeans had come to realise that the potential synergy and partnership between the two regions had been largely under-estimated, in the political and cultural fields as well as the economic sphere. The ASEM initiative also reflected a sentiment that in today's multipolar world, relations between Asia and Europe had lagged behind strengthening trans-Pacific and trans-Atlantic links, and an urgent need was felt to rectify this asymmetry.

The Second ASEM Summit will be held in London on 3-4 April 1998. The decisions to be taken in London will largely determine the future course of the ASEM process. It will be important to address *a framework* programme for ASEM activities through until the Third Summit in Seoul in the year 2000, covering both a delineation of priority areas and a means of ensuring a proper focus and coordination within these areas. It is essential that the EU should clearly establish its own goals and priorities in this context. This working paper is the Commission's contribution towards this end.

### 2) Progress to date

The general EU objective in ASEM, as agreed upon at the European Council in Madrid and drawing to a significant extent on the Commission's 1994 paper "Towards a New Asia Strategy", is to build a comprehensive partnership between Asia and Europe. This partnership should be based on the promotion of political dialogue, the deepening of economic relations and the reinforcement of mutual awareness. There have been significant developments in all of these areas since Bangkok, although the pace of progress has been uneven.

Progress has been particularly rapid in the field of **economic dialogue and cooperation**. Major ASEM events in 1996 included a meeting of Customs Director-Generals (Shenzhen, June 1996), a joint public-private sector Working Group on Investment (Bangkok, July 1996), a Senior Officials Meeting on Trade and Investment (SOMTI, Brussels, July 1996), and the Asia-Europe Business Forum (Paris, October 1996). A draft Investment Promotion Action Plan, or IPAP, is being finalised, while initial discussions on a Trade Facilitation Action Plan, or TFAP, are under way.

The **political dialogue** foreseen by the Bangkok Summit has been slower to get off the ground. Following the presentation of an EU working-paper in October of 1996, a substantial discussion of possible modalities and priorities for ASEM political dialogue has nevertheless taken place. The Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Singapore in February 1997 agreed that this political dialogue must be an integral part of the ASEM process, and that sensitive subjects should not be excluded. The dialogue should however be developed gradually in a spirit of

equality and with a view to creating a climate of confidence and mutual understanding. Topics for discussion should be selected with an emphasis on issues which would help draw ASEM partners together.

**Cooperation in other areas**, including in particular the social and cultural dimension, has also seen significant progress. The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) was launched in Singapore in February 1997. The first ASEM Young Leaders' Symposium took place in Japan in March of 1997, and an expert group meeting on technological exchanges and cooperation was held in Beijing in April 1997. Preparations are underway for the establishment of an Asia-Europe Environmental Technology Centre in Bangkok.

### 3) **Key priorities**

#### 3.1) **General considerations**

The existing programme of ASEM follow-up activities is wide-ranging and quite hectic, keeping ministers and officials busy until London and beyond (see attached calendar). In order to avoid the risk of an exaggerated and uncoordinated proliferation of activities, there is an urgent need for a framework programme for the ASEM process to be agreed in London. Such a framework should identify priorities for the near and medium term, building on the most successful elements of the follow-up so far. It should also fine-tune the preparatory and coordinating mechanisms of ASEM.

More specifically, a framework programme to be agreed in London (and which will require substantive prior discussion at the Senior Officials' level) could in particular include :

- the delineation of a limited number of **key objectives** to be given special emphasis in the coming two years;
- the elaboration of an overall **work programme** for these two years, prioritised in line with the key objectives;
- and the establishment of agreed **procedures** for reviewing, endorsing and coordinating new follow-up initiatives.

In addition, the London ASEM should decide on how the question of **enlargement** should be handled.

Any such framework must of course fully reflect the underlying nature of the ASEM process, and be in keeping with its core advantages.

Several participants in the recent ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Singapore noted that ASEM can be seen as a club of like-minded partners. An open and wide-ranging dialogue in this framework will promote an enhanced understanding among partners and an enhanced awareness of their common interest. This will facilitate their interaction in a wide range of fields (including areas which might otherwise be thought of as sensitive), and help ensure that their individual actions and decisions reflect this enhanced understanding. No less importantly, the ASEM process will assist greatly in identifying areas of common interest and in focusing attention on shared priorities. This will make it easier for ASEM partners to promote these common interests in global fora, as well as to identify priorities for concerted action in pursuit of these common interests.

ASEM is not of course an isolated process, and it has often been noted that overlap with the other bilateral and multilateral fora linking Asia and Europe should be avoided. It is clear

that ASEM can in no sense replace or substitute for these other fora, but should facilitate and stimulate their work. And as an essentially informal process, ASEM cannot be seen as a forum for negotiating agreements. Our over-riding concern should *not only* be to minimise overlap, *but also* to maximise added-value, drawing on the specific comparative advantage of the ASEM process, and reflecting in particular its informality, its multi-dimensionality, and its highly visible political profile.

This process must of course draw equally on the three key dimensions addressed in Bangkok (political, economic and cultural), and should not prioritise one single dimension above the others. Equally, the process must go beyond governments, and should promote dialogue and cooperation between the private sectors of the two regions, and no less importantly between the peoples of the two regions.

### **3.2) Priorities for specific areas**

**In the political area**, it will be essential to firmly establish the political dialogue foreseen in Bangkok. It is to be hoped that a substantial dialogue can be established already at the SOM in Luxembourg in October of this year, building on the broad understanding reached at the Singapore Foreign Ministers Meeting in February 1997. Regional security issues (ARF, KEDO, NATO, OSCE, EU) as well as certain international issues (arms control, UN reform, disarmament, drug trafficking, terrorism, transnational organised crime, environment) would all appear to be important initial themes for this dialogue. The issue of anti-personnel land-mines should also be considered. The London ASEM should build further on this foundation, as well as seeking to enhance the informal dialogue on political issues through the encouragement of academic networks and seminars. In this context, the Franco-Swedish initiative to hold seminars on human rights and the rule of law could serve as a constructive example. For its part, the Commission is considering to organise an ASEM symposium on economic security.

**In the economic area**, the London ASEM will be preceded by a very intensive work programme in 1997. The Meetings in September 1997 of Finance Ministers and Economic Ministers respectively should lay the foundation for a strong continued follow-up after the next summit. Top priorities should be the adoption and implementation of TFAP and IPAP, together with strengthened joint efforts in the WTO context. It is essential that the TFAP and IPAP initiatives generate concrete improvements in the environment facing traders and investors. The dialogue in SOMTI on joint efforts in the WTO to liberalise trade and investment should be deepened. The Asia-Europe Business Forum should be further consolidated, strengthening its role both as a forum for networking, and as a source of ideas and sounding board for Government efforts to promote trade and investment. The Business Forum should be given a coordinating and supporting role with regard to other business events, and should give a particular attention to the needs of SMEs. Cooperation among customs authorities should result in a major contribution to TFAP through facilitation of customs procedures.

More specifically, the dialogue on WTO matters is a key element in SOMTI and should be enhanced in future meetings, particularly as we are approaching critical stages in negotiations on specific WTO issues, including financial services, trade and investment, trade and competition, government procurement, and market opening for LLDCs. ASEM partners should aim at a close cooperation in the preparation of the 1998 WTO Ministerial Conference, and in preparing future multilateral negotiations on further liberalisation.

TFAP should achieve progress towards trade facilitation in areas such as customs procedures, standards harmonisation, public procurement, IPR and regulatory transparency. A system for benchmarking should be established in order to ensure that all participants make balanced contributions. The monitoring of TFAP should be carried out by SOMTI, while its actual implementation would be carried out primarily at the multilateral, bilateral or indeed unilateral level.

For IPAP, the adoption of an initial Action Plan will certainly not mean the end of an effort, but rather the achievement of one stage in the long term process to increase two-way investment flows between Europe and Asia. IPAP should give guidance on our future work on this topic. A dialogue should be pursued on impediments to investment and how they relate to the regulatory environment. The Business Forum and SOMTI should be the main fora for this dialogue, and a SOMTI working-group in this area should be considered. Such a group could also usefully complement the WTO work on investment, where Asian partners will play a decisive role in advancing the agenda.

In addition, the Economic Ministers' Meeting in September 1997 is likely to have a wide-ranging discussion of the economic synergy between Asia and Europe. This may give an opportunity to identify one or other sectors of priority interest for ASEM dialogue in the coming two years, including for example information technology, environment, energy or transport.

**In the social and cultural fields**, a host of follow-ups have been initiated. Educational and cultural cooperation has been particularly in focus. Given the long list of specific actions and more general themes set out in Bangkok, it will be essential to establish a clear view on how best to take these forward. In many cases it may be preferable to promote ASEM objectives through an enhanced dialogue and understanding at the ASEM level, which would then be translated into specific action unilaterally or bilaterally.

Particular emphasis should be put on building key networks, particularly in fields such as university cooperation, student exchanges and science and technology. It became evident in such meetings as the Business Forum and the Young Leaders Symposium that these more personal links between Asia and Europe are weaker than we would wish, and that stronger personal contacts are an essential part of a stronger overall Asia-Europe partnership. In this context, it might be mentioned that the Commission is already undertaking a wide range of initiatives in this area, in all regions of Asia, and is actively studying additional possibilities (including a pilot exchange programme for business students between Europe and Japan and China, a programme for promoting networking between universities in Europe and in ASEAN, and a new high-tech RTD cooperation policy with emerging economies).

Finally, one should not forget the considerable public interest generated by the Bangkok Summit, nor the risk that this interest might be dissipated if insufficient attention is paid to the "human face" of ASEM. Particular importance could be placed on activities in connection with the media and with public opinion generally, as well as on a series of cultural events (in the broadest sense) which would promote relations between Asia and Europe. In this context active support of ASEM activities by all partners will be essential to foster cultural and intellectual exchange between Asia and Europe and to make the Foundation a highly visible expression of the ASEM achievements. In order to better inform the public about ASEM activities, an active and multinodal ASEM presence on the Internet should be established. The Commission is considering how best to promote this, and as a provisional measure has already placed a range of ASEM basic reference documents on its Europa server <http://europa.eu.int>.

#### **4) The management of the ASEM process**

##### **4.1) The management of new initiatives**

The Bangkok Summit established an extensive list of ASEM follow-up activities. Subsequently, various additional follow-up actions have been proposed, while other ideas continue to emerge. This multiplication of follow-up proposals is a welcome reflection of the interest and enthusiasm ASEM has generated. However, there is a risk that the proliferation of such activities will lead to loss of focus and direction in the ASEM process. In continuing to develop the initiatives agreed in Bangkok, and in preparing for new initiatives which might be proposed in London or after, it will be essential to consider how the process of identifying and agreeing such follow-up activities can best be managed. Such procedural improvements should be a central element of the framework mentioned in section 3.1 above.

Most important is to ensure that all new ASEM initiatives have the full consensus and active support of all ASEM partners, as well as being in line with the key objectives and work programme agreed at Summit level. Partners should be informed of proposed initiatives in a timely fashion, and given the opportunity to consider them at the Coordinators' and Senior Officials' level before they are formally put forward for agreement at higher level. To ensure that this is effective, new proposals would usefully be introduced initially in the context of Coordinators' Meetings, and in any case should be circulated to all partners at least six weeks before a Senior Officials' Meeting.

This need for prior consultation and clear consensus among all partners is imperative for proposals to hold meetings at the Ministerial or Senior Official level, where the absence of any one partner could be detrimental to the success of the activity or indeed to the ASEM process per se. This is equally important with regard to activities calling for concerted action among ASEM partners (such as IPAP or TFAP, for example), or for working groups likely to make recommendations to Senior Officials or Ministers. All such efforts must be highly focused, reflecting the priorities and consensus of ASEM partners as a whole.

This is equally the case for proposed initiatives which may require the financial support of other ASEM partners, or for activities for which an official "ASEM label" is sought. In both cases, the full consensus of ASEM partners should be required before such activities are launched. And for initiatives with any possible financial implication for other partners, the proponent should accompany their initial proposal with an indication of overall costs, and of how they would foresee the financing of this activity. In general, however, jointly-funded actions or programmes will be the exception rather than the rule, given the informal and non-institutional character of the ASEM process. More frequently, an individual ASEM partner might organise an event or symposium, and take full responsibility for its execution; such an event would still merit an ASEM label on condition that it were open to all ASEM partners and all partners agreed that this be considered an ASEM activity.

On the other hand, there will also be cases of ASEM-supportive actions, where one or a few partners undertake an initiative which clearly addresses ASEM objectives, but is not necessarily open to all ASEM partners or to ASEM partners exclusively, and does not require financial support from other partners, nor official ASEM recognition. Such actions will not call for any ASEM consensus. But where they are clearly supportive of the ASEM process



they should be recognised as such, and it will be important for individual ASEM partners to keep each other informed. In practice, such supportive initiatives may come to represent a very large part of ASEM follow-up, and the possible multiplication of such initiatives should be a matter for satisfaction rather than concern.

Special attention should however be given to any proposals for the establishment of "ASEM Centres" or other permanent or semi-permanent activities. Two such initiatives have so far been agreed among ASEM partners : the establishment of the Asia-Europe Foundation in Singapore and an Asia-Europe Environmental Technology Centre in Thailand. Given the informal and non-institutional character of ASEM, such actions must be the exception rather than the rule. We should be particularly cautious about any proliferation of ASEM institutions, and it would seem essential to build up an adequate experience with the operation of these two agreed initiatives before considering any further such actions.

#### **4.2) General coordination mechanisms**

The Bangkok Summit agreed that ASEM Foreign Ministers and Senior Officials would coordinate and prepare for the Second ASEM, but was silent on any more specific coordination mechanisms. Nevertheless, the evolution of the ASEM process has made it necessary to develop practical arrangements whereby the growing number of ASEM activities might be effectively prepared and coordinated.

Bearing in mind the conclusion of the Bangkok Summit that inter-sessional activities are necessary but need not be institutionalised, the arrangements developed so far seem to be broadly satisfactory. There is in particular a clear consensus that the Foreign Ministers and their Senior Officials must be responsible for overall coordination. However, it will be important that this general coordination role does not detract from the more specific role of Foreign Ministers and Senior Officials in the political dialogue.

It was already suggested at the Dublin meeting that Senior Officials meetings might be held more frequently, perhaps with a two-level structure, with general meetings of Political Directors and more specific meetings of Asia/Europe Directors. A practical solution here might be to organise the SOM in such a manner that it can fulfill both its coordinating function and a political dialogue role; for example, a two-day SOM might start with a full or half - day meeting for coordination purposes, continuing with a full day meeting specifically for political dialogue. In the particular context of political dialogue, attention might also be given to the role which SOM working groups might play in the exploration of specific issues.

At the practical level, the Coordinators' Group, bringing together officials from the EU Council Presidency and the European Commission, and from two Asian countries (currently Singapore and Japan), clearly has an essential role to play. This light and effective structure should be maintained, and the frequency and scheduling of such meetings should be kept under review. It will also be important to ensure that ASEM partners responsible for organising major ASEM events can take part in such meetings at the appropriate time, while not detracting from the informal character of this framework. Coordinators should also be present in the preparation of major ASEM events such as Ministerial meetings, Senior Officials meetings or Business Fora, in order to allow for a necessary overall coherence of the ASEM process.

Another important element in general coordination is the adequate and timely sharing of information among ASEM partners. A regular and informal "status report", prepared by

coordinators and circulated rapidly among all partners, can make an important contribution here. It will be important for partners to keep Coordinators fully informed if this report is to be useful.

#### 4.3) Coordination within the EU

Covering a wide range of themes and initiatives in different areas, the ASEM process potentially touches upon all three pillars of the Union's activities. All Member States of the Union (with one acting as the Presidency of the Council), together with the Commission, participate in the ASEM process. It is therefore important to consider also the internal management and coordination of this process, and to ensure that the internal division of competences and the respective procedures relating to the three different pillars are respected.

In order to improve transparency and coordinate the different aspects of the ASEM process, it has proved indispensable within the Commission to consult all concerned services regularly and to ensure a smooth flow of information. Within the Council, the Asia-Oceania Group (mixed group) has likewise been able to play an essential role in ensuring overall coordination. Bearing in mind the general coordinating role assigned to Foreign Ministers by the ASEM Summit, it would seem appropriate to continue and strengthen this central role of the Asia-Oceania Group *for all ASEM activities, without of course prejudicing the specific competences of sectoral groups. Indeed the Asia-Oceania Group should act as the focal point for coordination of all ASEM activities (and as a simple practical step, all ASEM-related documents should be circulated in this group to ensure a transparent and effective flow of information). Foreign Ministers, Senior Officials and Coordinators will of course play a key role in ensuring the consistency of the ASEM process, but care should be taken to ensure that, at Community level, positions with respect to new initiatives to be taken up in the ASEM framework are established in full transparency and respect of Community procedures.*

*Further, and in order to ensure full consensus and support for the ASEM process within the Union, it will be necessary to increase the transparency of the decision-making process and to encourage a more substantial flow of information between the European Union's institutions (Commission, Council, European Parliament).*

#### 5) ASEM enlargement

The Bangkok Summit concluded that ASEM needed to be open and evolutionary. Nevertheless, even before that several countries in Asia and in Europe had expressed a strong interest in taking part. Since then the number of countries interested in joining has continued to rise.

No detailed consensus on possible expansion has yet been reached. Initial discussions took place at the recent ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting, but more in terms of possible general parameters. The one element on which most ASEM partners would seem to agree concerns the manner in which possible new candidacies might be approved, namely through a "two-step consensus" or "double-key" approach (with an initial consensus within a candidate's own region, followed by an overall consensus among all partners). Other elements to be addressed include questions of timing (possible decisions before or at the Second and Third Summits), of *non-automaticity*, of the relative weight to be given to consolidation versus

enlargement, and of the possible development of certain specific criteria relating to any new participation in the ASEM process.

These questions will require very careful reflection among all ASEM partners and one cannot at this stage seek to prejudge the outcome. Nevertheless, there are certain key elements which EU partners should bear in mind.

First and foremost, it is essential that the special character of the EU be respected. The Union as Union is a key participant in ASEM and must be present in its own right in the ASEM process, with the explicit participation of both the Presidency of the Council and the Commission.. The Member-States having delegated certain competences to the Communities, it is the Community which must address certain issues. This does not of course mean that Europe must speak as the Union in fields which lie purely within national competence.

Second, one should reflect on the implications of any possible extension in European participation in ASEM beyond the EU proper. The underlying objectives of the ASEM process, particularly in relation to its economic and political dimensions, are and will remain fundamental concerns of the Union. In addressing such fundamental concerns, the Union as Union must therefore remain at the core of the ASEM process. This special role of the Union must also be borne in mind in considering any possible enlargement of ASEM participation on the European side. As the EU expands, the incoming Member States will of course play a full role in the ASEM process as in other aspects of the Union's external relations.

Looking to Asia, it is clear that an initial proposal for any expanded Asian participation must come from the Asian side, subject of course to a broader Asia-Europe consensus thereafter. Nevertheless, the current numerical "imbalance" in ASEM (with fifteen EU and ten Asian countries) would suggest that, if an enlargement takes place, it would logically involve Asian participation.

Several partners had suggested at the Singapore Foreign Ministers Meeting that consideration be given to developing a set of simple criteria with regard to enlargement. Such indicative criteria might be helpful in ensuring that enlargement is pursued in a measured and deliberate manner. In essence, however, any decision on enlargement is ultimately a political decision. If criteria were to be considered, the main element should be whether the proposed enlargement would facilitate the achievement of the stated objectives of ASEM, since it is clearly easier to absorb countries which share these objectives.



### ASEM Calendar

#### 1) Major activities in 1997 (second semester)

8-10 Jul. 97	Business Conference	Jakarta
26 Jul. 97	Coordinators' Meeting (general)	Kuala Lumpur
Jul. 97	IPAP; 2nd Working Group on Investment	Luxembourg
03 Sep. 97	Symposium on infrastructure financing	Frankfurt
19 Sep. 97	<b>Finance Ministers' Meeting</b>	Bangkok
27-29 Sep. 97	<b>Economic Ministers' Meeting</b>	Tokyo
23 Oct. 97	<i>Meeting of Cultural Operators</i>	<i>France</i>
24-25 Oct. 97	ASEF; 2nd Board of Governors' Meeting	<i>Luxembourg</i>
30-31 Oct. 97	3rd SOM (Senior Officials Meeting; foreign affairs)	Luxembourg
13-14 Nov. 97	2nd Business Forum	Thailand
11-13 Dec. 97	<i>1st ASEM seminar on human rights &amp; the rule of law</i>	<i>Lund</i>

*Elements in italics are subject to confirmation*

2) Major activities in 1998 and after

5-6 Feb. 98	3rd SOMTI (Senior Officials' Meeting, trade & investment)	Belgium
Feb. 98	4th SOM (Senior Officials' Meeting; foreign affairs)	London
1st qtr. 98	<i>Forum for Small/Medium Enterprises</i>	<i>Naples</i>
early 98	<i>High-level business event</i>	UK
02 Apr. 98	<i>Foreign Ministers' Meeting (prep. Summit)</i>	London
03-04 Apr. 98	<b>Second ASEM Summit</b>	London
1st sem. 98	<i>Symposium, social challenges into the 21st century</i>	UK
Spring 98	2nd Young Leaders' Symposium	Austria

1st sem. 1999	<b>2nd Foreign Ministers' Meeting</b>	Germany
1999	<b>2nd Economic Ministers' Meeting</b>	Berlin
1999	<i>2nd Finance Ministers' Meeting</i>	<i>Europe</i>
1999	Business Forum	Korea

2000	<b>Third ASEM Summit</b>	Seoul
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