



## **4<sup>TH</sup> ASEM DIALOGUE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

### **ASEM SEMINAR ON STRENGTHENING CONCERTED ACTIONS ON WATER MANAGEMENT THROUGH POST - 2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA**

Ben Tre, Viet Nam, 4 – 5 June 2015

#### **SUMMARY REPORT**

1. The ASEM Seminar on Strengthening Concerted Actions on Water Management through Post – 2015 Development Agenda – a joint initiative by the EU, Bulgaria, Hungary, Lao PDR, Romania, Slovakia, Thailand and Viet Nam, was organized in Ben Tre Province, Viet Nam, from 4 – 5 June 2015. The event was endorsed by ASEM Leaders at the 10<sup>th</sup> ASEM Summit held in Milan in October 2014 with a view to reinforcing the ASEM tangible cooperation in addressing emerging challenges to promote sustainable water management, including integrated river basin management and providing a discussion platform for members and relevant institutions.

2. The Seminar gathered about 180 participants, including ASEM government officials, researchers, experts, and representatives from the World Bank, UN-Water Decade Programme on Advocacy and Communication (UNW-DPAC), International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), ASEAN Secretariat, Mekong River Commission (MRC) and the Hans Seidel Foundation. (The list of participants is attached as Annex).

3. In a keynote address, H.E. Mr. Pham Binh Minh, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam highlighted the urgent need of ASEM members to strengthen concerted actions in response to the more acute and complicated global water challenges, especially in this critical year of global action on sustainable development, thus contributing to global efforts to ensure a deserving role of water in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The Deputy Prime Minister called on the participants to explore concrete measures for tangible cooperation between the two continents for sustainable water management.

4. During the discussions, participants expressed their support for a stand-alone goal on water in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Participants also re-emphasized that addressing key water - related challenges, particularly trans-boundary river challenges, needed integrated approaches with joint efforts not only at national but also regional and global levels. The role played by local people and local authorities in dealing with such challenges was also underlined. The Ben Tre – Tulcea cooperation project was highlighted and considered as a good example of a concrete cooperation at local level on sustainable water management between the two countries in the two continents.

The participants underscored the nexus of water, food and energy as major global trend in the next decades and also highlighted the unique Mekong – Danube mechanism within ASEM framework as a model in transforming the challenges related to food, water and energy security into opportunities for inclusive growth and sustainable development. The Seminar also underlined the importance of capacity development, good governance at all levels, innovation and technologies application, inter-disciplinary research, public – private partnership enhancement and financing, those are amongst the most effective ways to ensure sustainable water management. Participants emphasized the pressing need to enhance prevention, resilience and preparedness towards water-related disasters. Many good experiences and practices, including bilateral, sub-regional and regional arrangements, were shared.

5. Participants discussed and proposed a number of recommendations to enhance the tangible cooperation between ASEM Partners to achieve sustainable management of water and river basin through Post - 2015 Development Agenda, including:

- (i) Enhancing ASEM contributions to global efforts to promote sustainable development, particularly in the framework of the upcoming United Nations Summit to adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda in New York, in September 2015 and the United Nations Conference on Climate Change (COP21) in Paris, in November - December 2015;
- (ii) Establishing an integrated water-related goal and targets of the Post-2015 Development Agenda into national development strategies as well as cooperative areas of ASEM;
- (iii) Exploring actions contributing to the promotion of a new comprehensive perspective to water management which includes, inter alia, access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene, wastewater management, water quality and efficiency, integrated water resources management, disaster risk reduction and environmental concerns;
- (iv) Enhancing exchange of views, lessons learned and best practices, including among provinces and towns from countries within the Mekong and Danube regions, and providing policy recommendations on sustainable water management, including sustainable use and sharing of trans-boundary water resources;
- (v) Activating the Efficient and Sustainable Water Management, Innovations in Water and Waste Management Area of Tangible Cooperation, endorsed by the ASEM Leaders at the 10th ASEM Summit, and making linkages among various initiatives, projects and cross-cutting and interrelated Tangible Cooperation Areas on Efficient and Sustainable Water Management, Innovations in Water and Waste Management, Disaster Management and Mitigation, Energy, Food Safety, and Poverty Reduction;
- (vi) Creating an ASEM network of experts, government officials, academic circles, international institutions and private sectors working on water management to share experiences and updated information on the field;
- (vii) Exploring the possibility to hold an ASEM Roundtable to share views and experiences on river basin management in Asia and Europe;
- (viii) Promoting assistance in narrowing the development gap, and fostering sub-regional and regional cooperation among ASEM members, including that between Mekong and Danube regions.
- (ix) Encouraging corporate social responsibility and public-private partnership and promoting the use and transfer of green and clean technology in water management.
- (x) Establishing a network of information sharing and a linkage among various research centers and institutes for water management.

6. The participants praised Viet Nam for hosting this important Seminar and expressed their appreciation to Bulgaria for the offer to host the next event of the ASEM Sustainable Development Dialogue in 2016. ASEM partners are encouraged to participate in/ organise future events of this nature. The Seminar welcomed the series of events to be held on the occasion of Danube Day (29 June).

7. The outcomes and recommendations of the Seminar will be reported to the 12<sup>th</sup> ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Luxembourg, in November 2015, the 11<sup>th</sup> ASEM Summit in Mongolia, in July 2016 - the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ASEM establishment.

*Ben Tre, Viet Nam, 5 June 2015*

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