

## **Second ASEM development conference: towards an Asia-Europe Partnership for sustainable development**

### **Presentation by Bertrand Fort -France-**

It gives me great pleasure to speak to you about Asia-Europe co-operation in the area of the environment and sustainable development in the context of ASEM.

Thanks to the authors of the background paper which provides us a substantial food for thought to give more flesh to a Asia Europe partnership on SD.

Acknowledgments also to the authors of the “ New challenges, new beginnings” paper. Even if this paper aims more at advising European policy makers than our biregional grouping, it reflected quite well France’s positions and objectives.

### **A FEW REMARKS ON ASEM AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPEMENT**

- At the ASEM 7 Summit in Beijing in 2008, ASEM leaders acknowledged the need for greater international co-operation to overcome the current international economic financial downturn, to go hand in hand with the urgent need to realise sustainable development goals and targets.
- In this context, greater and deeper co-operation between Asian and European governments in the field of environment and sustainable development could act as a catalyst to turn **crisis into opportunity**.
- At the same time, **sustainable development is also at the crux of concerns and activities of our societies and of civil society in its broadest spectrum**: the academe, think tanks and research institutes, non-government organisations, the media, trade unions, the private sector and others.
- Thus, while **political declarations and commitments are vital**, there is also a need for real and concrete co-operation emanating from the ASEM process. For that, **all stakeholders must be involved in the endeavour**.

- First, it is true and good to underline –as does the background paper of this conference-the need for development policies **to engage more and better with the private sector**. Inclusive businesses engage low-income communities across the value-chain: through direct employment, the expansion of supply, distribution and service opportunities for low-income communities, or through the innovative provision of affordable goods and services directed to meet their needs.
- But it is as true – and underlined by all impact studies- that aid efficiency requires **participation and ownership** of development projects by the very people they are supposed to help. For that, nothing is better than a genuine ownership of these projects by **local civil society organisations and local governments**. Among CSO's, the most efficient relays are certainly women's associations because of their greater tendency to re-distribute the benefits of aid due to their closer connection to the basic needs of their community. This is probably one of the basic conditions of this **“smart aid”** introduced in the background paper. **Direct support to these grassroots organisations** should be privileged and is much more efficient than channelling funds through multilateral funds and/or global international NGO's.
- In this regard, France would like to stress the importance to integrate better culture and cultural projects in development programs. AS underlined at the Aril 2009 large international conference organised by the EC in Brussels, culture is one of the conditions of success of development strategies as it is rooted into the deepest aspirations of the people. This dimension is maybe missing in the background paper
- One of the messages I would like to convey to you today is that **ASEM partners should be more proud and follow up more on the deliverables** of the only permanent organisation of their grouping, **the Asia Europe Foundation or ASEF**.
- In the field of Sustainable Development, **the Asia Europe Environment Forum**, spearheaded by ASEF and launched in 2003, acted since then as a think tank for ASEM on SD issues. Its partnership has identified the key issues in the field of the environment and sustainable development, and in the process, mobilised a wide range of relevant stakeholders in both government and civil society. In doing so, the ENVforum addressed the need for a comprehensive and all-inclusive platform for dialogue and debate on the environment and sustainable development between Asia and Europe.

- The ENVforum channels recommendations emanating from these extensive multistakeholder consultations –involving relevant ministries from all ASEM countries- directly into realtime policy debates. Thus, over the years, **the ENVforum has proven to be an effective vehicle to bridge initiatives among ASEM governments, the private sector and civil society in Asia and Europe.**

- Since its inception, **the ENVForum has been acknowledged by several times by ASEM environment ministers and ASEM leaders** In 2003 ASEM env. Ministers “*welcomed the Asia-Europe Environment Forum... as providing an opportunity for informal consultation among civil society stakeholders on the implementation of the WSSD outcomes*”.

Most recently at the ASEM 7 Summit in Beijing, China, in 2008, whereby “*leaders acknowledged the key message on [the need for a] sustainable energy [path] from the 6<sup>th</sup> Asia-Europe Environment Forum [Roundtable]*” .

For example:

According to UNEP, the harmonisation of three major conventions (Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm) on chemicals and hazardous waste management, a key outcome of the UNEP Ministerial held in Bali, Indonesia, held earlier this year, can be attributed to outcomes of the 2005 ENV Forum Jakarta Conference. These Conference proceedings were perceived as a reference point for Sweden on "what Asia is currently thinking on sustainable development" and influenced SIDA's regional programme for Asia.

- **An ASEM development policy should bring answers to 4 crucial issues :** The challenge of **stability and security**, most of the time linked to the weakness or absence of rule of law in several countries
2. The challenge of **changing conventional models of economic growth**, due to the need of greater economic and financial regulation as revealed by the current crisis and to the dependence of this growth to non renewable resources
  3. The challenge of the **fight against poverty and inequality** as one of the major source of global instability;
    - First, as outlined before, the **local level is key** to the success of these global policies and in
    - Second, a **global approach of development financing** is today indispensable **to insert public development aid into**

**the whole range of financial flows**, public or private, financing development:

- Including **domestic revenue from taxes** by developing country authorities (and the need to consolidate them);
  - **Foreign direct investments** (5 times the volume of ODA at the global level and which should be secured by greater protection at the national and international level);
  - **Private aid** (evaluated at 40 billion \$/ year);
  - **Migrant's remittances** (300 Billions \$/year; in addition, transactions should be easier and cheaper).
- Third, **innovative financing** deserves a greater status within this global approach of development financing as, just within the last couple of years, it appeared as exemplary and indispensable to the new financing needs of global public goods. It is not realistic indeed to base MDG's financing, a greener growth and global public goods protection only on OECD countries' taxpayers, due to the massive financing need;

**International economic activities** which have most benefited from globalisation (and which are comparatively under-taxed) **have also to contribute** to development challenges: with the airline tickets flights, France has pioneered a new way to bring new resources to the fight against Aids, tuberculosis and malaria (UNITAID) and tax on financial transactions would provide huge amounts for little efforts and pain (one speaks of a 0,005%, i.e. 5 cents only for every thousand dollars invested);

- Promotion of **democratic governance**, which goes much beyond the concept of "good governance" (centred on a good management of public affairs and fight against corruption), should be integrated into our political dialogue. The way national and regional strategies are built and delivered matters;
- A better answer to development challenges goes also through a **greater coherence of OECD policies** notably those having a strong impact on development (trade and norms regulations, energy and agriculture policies...). This global approach integrating all dimensions of development alights the **preparation of the upcoming concurrent French presidency of the G8 and G 20** at the end of this year, a pragmatic approach **putting collective action first** in order to escape from the kind of paralysis of consensus we faced for instance in Copenhagen. This vision **refuses the artificial divide between an historic bloc of fund providers on one**

**hand and “developing countries” on the other hand**, such distinction being at the detriment of the poorest countries. On the contrary it invites us, especially industrialized and emerging countries to **a more cooperative approach to development aid**, based on coalitions of interests in order to overcome the current blockages.

## **2010 AND BEYOND**

- This brings me to the last segment of my message: what is needed for Asia-Europe dialogue and co-operation on environment and sustainable development?
- Certainly, the expansion of ASEM this year to include Russia, Australia and New Zealand, brings with it several challenges as well as opportunities.
- **More longer-term projects such as collaborative policy analysis projects, scenario building exercises and outlook reports** on specific environmental and sustainable development issues are needed—for this, **ASEF is our collective tool**;
- **The idea is to pioneer information collection and generate original analysis on current and future sustainable development issues** that are directly relevant to encouraging greater dialogue and co-operation between Asian and European countries;
- For that, we should seriously find ways to **encourage greater and more systematic involvement from civil society, the private sector and—considering the future-oriented nature of our work--the youth** in our activities.

Thank you.