

Brussels Pathway for ASEM Connectivity: Interlinking ASEM with Global Development Programmes and Global Governance

Anita Prakash

October 2018

This chapter should be cited as

Prakash, A. (2018), 'Brussels Pathway for ASEM Connectivity: Interlinking ASEM with Global Development Programmes and Global Governance', in Prakash, Anita (eds.), *Brussels Report on Strengthening Asia-Europe Connectivity: Drawing Synergy from Global Development and Governance Programmes*, Jakarta: ERIA, pp.94-100.

CONCLUSION

Brussels Pathway for ASEM Connectivity

INTERLINKING ASEM WITH
GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMMES AND
GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Anita Prakash

Brussels Pathway for ASEM Connectivity

INTERLINKING ASEM WITH GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Anita Prakash

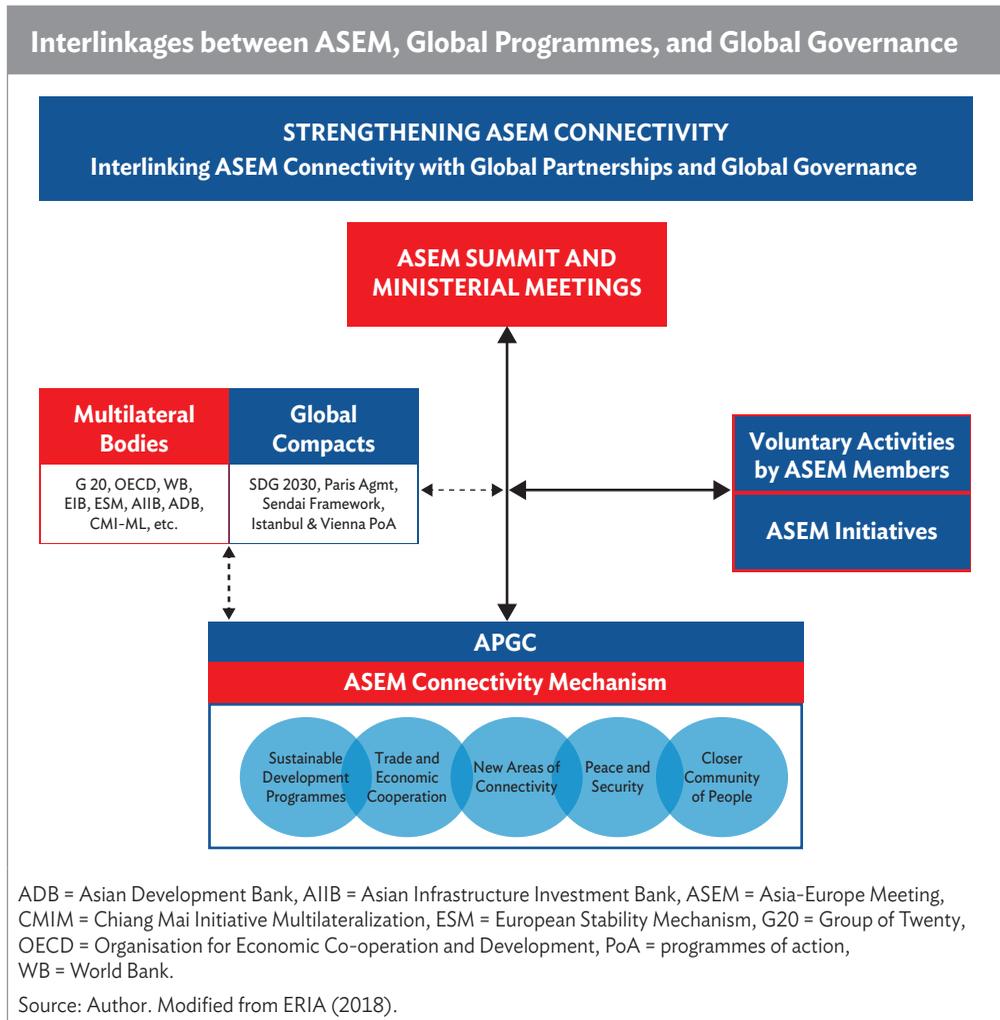
When the leaders of Asia and Europe converge at the 12th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Summit in Brussels, the theme of the summit – Global Partners for Global Challenges – will resonate in their discussions and decisions. In its 22 years of existence, ASEM has maintained its status as a non-formal multilateral group, which gives it immense flexibility to reach out to partners in Asia and Europe and to work together with them to fill in the crucial knowledge and development gaps in the region. ASEM's accomplishments in three pillars – political, economic and social-cultural – are diverse and relevant for its members.

When ASEM entered its third decade in 2016, there were challenges all around the globe. As the global economy recovered from the global financial crisis, other political and economic challenges, such as migration, rising fences across borders, barriers to trade, global peace and security, and climate change, continued to keep the policy focus on responsible growth and inclusive development for all people. The 11th ASEM Summit was held amid a backdrop of a global consensus on creating action plans and partnerships for making growth inclusive. Sharing and partnerships, cooperation and connectivity, and all forms of collaborations became the bywords for policymakers around the globe. In its third decade, ASEM, therefore, has made a larger commitment to its own members and the global community. ASEM leaders chose to place ASEM's strength and mechanisms behind supporting countries and global institutions for sustainable development and creating conditions where the benefits of development can be shared by all. There is an understanding among the ASEM members to use the combined strength of ASEM to respond to global challenges. The leaders have resolved to work together to energise ASEM and promote further connectivity, mutually beneficial partnerships, and cooperation between Asia and Europe with a view to building an inclusive, sustainable, and radiant future for ASEM's people.

ASEM connectivity is the most visible face of the informal grouping. It has become the platform through which ASEM can raise its strength for addressing global challenges and delivering local results. A freshly energised and revamped ASEM connectivity mechanism is being presented at the Brussels summit with a clear role allocation for ASEM's formal and informal stakeholders. The ASEM Connectivity Inventory, prepared by the hosts of the 12th Summit, has contributed to channelling the formal and voluntary initiatives for ASEM connectivity into results-bearing mechanisms. ASEM in 2018 is formally prepared to contribute to the common goals and objectives of important global partnerships and cooperation programmes that can add value to ASEM's vision of connectivity and strengthen ASEM connectivity itself (Figure 7.1).

FIGURE 7.1

Interlinkages between ASEM, Global Programmes, and Global Governance



Building on ASEM's mandate to draw synergy from global programmes for sustainable development that share common goals and objectives with ASEM, this report details Asia and Europe's collective approach towards global development programmes and how the ASEM connectivity mechanisms are addressing sustainable development programmes in ASEM's unique way. There is a special focus on programmes of action for least developed countries, landlocked least developed countries, and Small Island Developing States.

ASEM Connectivity for Sustainable Development

Assessment of the status of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Asia and Europe reveals that ASEM has the special task of supporting the capacities of its members for creating data for measuring progress towards the 2030 SDGs. The wide divergence in the quality and quantity of data from countries reveals enormous capacity challenges. ASEM's connectivity mechanisms have a strong knowledge and capacity-sharing base, which should be used for ensuring the progress and accountability of the development goals in Asia and Europe. ASEM's unique contribution to the 2030 Agenda could comprise of putting the connectivity mechanism to the task of supporting uniform data reporting and analysis of the progress towards the goals and targets in ASEM countries. An ASEM report on the SDGs in global bodies would be a genuine ASEM connectivity-generated contribution to the SDGs and global governance. This would also strengthen cooperation among ASEM members. ASEM has the reach across Asia and Europe and among global institutions to accomplish this task.

ASEM integration can be further enhanced if Goal 17 is put at the centre of ASEM's cooperation on SDGs. Technology, capacity-building, trade and economic cooperation, and data and monitoring are the strengths of ASEM's cooperation. ASEM's strong linkages along the political, economic, and social-cultural pillars make the task of supporting Goal 17 more assured. Agenda 2030 requires global partnerships to ensure its implementation. ASEM's connectivity mechanisms can work to bring together governments, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations, and other multilateral institutions for mobilising resources and expertise on sustainable development.

The Danube-Mekong Cooperation Initiative is a concrete example of ASEM connectivity working for sustainable development issues. It shows the way forward for further cooperation between ASEM partners in the framework of the ASEM Sustainable Development Dialogue and encourages further concerted actions for tangible cooperation

between Asia and Europe in water-related issues through transboundary, subregional, and bi-regional cooperation. The outcomes of the Danube-Mekong Cooperation Initiative, which are reported to ASEM, should be shared with multilateral agencies monitoring progress towards the SDGs.

ASEM Connectivity Is Effective in Knowledge Sharing and Capacity Development

The Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework are linked closely with the 2030 Agenda, even though they are being administered and monitored by different global agencies and government agencies. On the ground, people and regions are commonly affected by the progress made in realising the objectives of these programmes. ASEM's connectivity mechanisms are well suited for providing knowledge sharing and cooperation for technology development and transfer, which are vital for supporting the implementation of the Paris Agreement. ASEM's connectivity activities should bring its members together for the sharing of knowledge and the transfer of technology, which can increase the ability of the members to adapt to the changing climate and fulfil their unconditional and conditional nationally determined contributions. ASEM connectivity will provide a platform for ASEM members to create knowledge frameworks for technology action plans. ASEM can report the findings to the Convention of Parties through the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice. Connectivity activities can gather ASEM's combined strength to support the workings of the Climate Technology Centre and Network, which supports further work in member countries relating to technology research, development and demonstration, and the development and enhancement of endogenous capacities and technologies.

The Paris Committee on Capacity-building is perhaps the most important platform for ASEM connectivity as it addresses the gaps and needs in implementing capacity-building in developing country parties and also enhances coherence and coordination in capacity-building activities under the Convention. Cooperation among ASEM members on knowledge sharing and technology development and transfer must be reported to the Paris Committee to increase synergies and avoid duplication among the groups and multilateral bodies that are supporting the realisation of the goals in the global development programmes.

Continuing the Momentum from Da Nang

Both Europe and Asia have plans of action to meet the goals of the Sendai Framework. However, ASEM has a rich framework of cooperation in the Da Nang Outcomes, which lay out pathways for ASEM cooperation in the implementation and monitoring of the Sendai Framework goals, the SDGs, and the Paris Agreement. ASEM could adopt the Da Nang Outcomes as the guiding principles for joint action in the implementation of these global programmes for sustainable development. The Da Nang outcomes underline the need to strengthen cooperation between ASEM partners in disaster risk reduction, management, preparedness, and relief through the sharing of knowledge and experience as well as the exchange of best practices. ASEM can share the outcomes of the Da Nang meeting (and its follow-up) with global partners to bring together disaster risk reduction and management, climate change, and sustainable development into a resilience framework with clear performance metrics. The non-binding recommendations of the Da Nang Outcomes for enhancing cooperation among ASEM partners adhere to the spirit of ASEM.

ASEM Connectivity Is Strengthened by Multilateralism and Global Governance

Asia-Europe connectivity stands reinforced and strengthened by effective multilateralism and a rules-based international order. In turn, ASEM's strength can reinforce the mandate and workings of multilateral institutions and governance mechanisms for trade, financial stability, and economic growth. ASEM's connectivity goals can be realised in an environment where there are cooperation and consensus among global partners for the common goals of growth and prosperity. The world needs more cooperation now than ever before. ASEM must take the lead in supporting global governance mechanisms, multilateral institutions, and the spirit of multilateralism itself.

ASEM represents a significant global population and a large part of the global economy. It comprises a group of countries that face most, if not all, of the challenges confronting the global community – sustainable growth, income inequality, trade, climate change, disaster risks, and peace and security. Global governance mechanisms are also addressing similar issues. ASEM's interlinkages with multilateral global governance organisations will reinforce both sides. ASEM connectivity's economic, political and social-cultural objectives will be strengthened by importing the learnings from the activities of other global and multilateral organisations. Similarly, ASEM's voice will provide multilateral and

intergovernmental bodies with a greater and more granular understanding of the domestic and regional trade and economic concerns of Asia and Europe, especially the developing and least developed economies.

As Asia and Europe work together to contribute to the solutions to global challenges, taking ASEM's voice to multilateral bodies, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Group of Twenty (G20), will be important for preserving the spirit of multilateralism, enhancing the consensus around a rules-based global order, and creating equal opportunities for economic growth for all its members. The WTO's outreach programmes and the G20's Ministerial (Track 1) and Sherpa (Track 2) processes are designed for cooperation with likeminded bodies. The outcomes of ASEM's connectivity activities related to economic connectivity and sustainable development can play an important role in bringing ASEM cooperation closer to the WTO and G20 agendas and in strengthening their multidimensional objectives.

The Time Is Right for Deepening and Strengthening ASEM Connectivity

To make ASEM more responsive to the emerging demands for connectivity within the framework of economic prosperity, institutional linkages, and social-cultural exchange and cooperation, ASEM has consolidated the lessons learned in the field of connectivity from its activities to further develop the direction of and framework for the policy processes of its connectivity activities.

A considerable number of ASEM activities touch upon one or more of the sustainable development programmes, but their relevance and contribution to advancing the goals of these programmes in member countries are not fully evident. A recent review of ASEM's connectivity activities reveals that the formal structures of ASEM – such as its Ministers' Meetings and Summits – are more results oriented. These structures constitute ASEM's strength as they typically provide clear guidance and direction. The ground covered by the ASEM Pathfinder's Group on Connectivity (APGC) between the Ulaanbaatar and Brussels summits in rationalising, infusing efficiency, and incorporating results orientation into ASEM's connectivity activities is commendable. With this clarity and focus, the APGC and the ASEM connectivity mechanism can seek guidance from ministerial meetings and senior official meetings on aligning the goals and objectives of global development programmes with the activities of ASEM. They can also share the outcomes of these activities with governments, multilateral institutions, and other stakeholders from civil society.

Governments across the globe recognise the growing importance of connectivity. The political and economic momentum within ASEM has supported the formation and continuation of the APGC and the restructured ASEM connectivity mechanisms. Global development programmes and the impetus for multilateralism call for greater interlinkages between individual governments and regional and multilateral institutions. The spirit of inclusive development and the motto of ‘leaving no one behind’ have resonated in national, regional, and even local policies and actions for development. The real test of ASEM connectivity, therefore, lies in delivering results that adhere to this spirit. This will also fulfil the theme of the 12th ASEM Summit: Global Partnerships for Global Challenges.

The current ASEM connectivity structure and the interlinkages visualised in Figure 7.1 will be able to create partnerships for ensuring results at the regional and subregional levels. The United Nations and other multilateral organisations are well placed to bring together regional governments, the private sector, and civil society for mobilising resources and expertise on sustainable development. In 2018, ASEM and other multilateral organisations have the opportunity and the rationale to lead the global community. ASEM’s connectivity and cooperation activities will help in finding synergy in the cooperation activities of its own members and its global partners for delivering regional and local results.

For the 12th ASEM Summit in Brussels during 18–19 October 2018, the time and direction are right for deepening and strengthening ASEM connectivity.

References

- Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) and Clingendael Institute (2018), *ASEM Inventory Report*. Brussels.
- Prakash, A. (2017), ‘Can the West Learn From East Asia? East Asian Economies Can Strengthen Global Trade and Economic’, *New Perspectives on Global Economic Dynamics*. Bertelsmann Stiftung.
- Prakash, A. (2018), *Global Governance 2.0: Enriching the Regional Content in Global Development Programmes*. Global Governance Centre, Graduate Institute, Geneva.