

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the 12th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Summit in Brussels during 18–19 October 2018, ASEM leaders will meet under the theme of ‘Asia and Europe: Global Partners for Global Challenges’ to chart ASEM’s common response to global issues. The *Brussels Report on Strengthening ASEM Connectivity* assesses the drivers for deepening ASEM connectivity and effectively using ASEM’s connectivity mechanisms for delivering results for global development programmes. ASEM has chosen to place the strength of its mechanisms behind supporting its member countries and global institutions alike to make progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and create conditions where the benefits of development can be shared by all. The combined strength of ASEM will be important for the global community to respond effectively to global challenges.

Through this process, ASEM connectivity will be raised to a larger purpose that transcends the borders of Asia and Europe. An assessment of Asia and Europe’s contribution to global development programmes, such as the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, suggests that ASEM connectivity mechanisms and their outcomes can contribute richly towards realising the objectives of the programmes.

ASEM’s connectivity mechanisms have a strong knowledge and capacity sharing base, which should be used for ensuring progress and accountability for the SDGs in Asia and Europe. ASEM’s connectivity initiatives can also be used to support uniform data reporting and analysis of the progress towards the 2030 SDGs in ASEM countries. An ASEM report on Asia-Europe cooperation for the global development programmes will be ASEM’s contribution to the SDGs and global governance.

ASEM’s Danube-Mekong Cooperation Initiative is a concrete example of ASEM connectivity working for sustainable development issues, and its outcomes should be shared with multilateral agencies. ASEM cooperation is also exemplified in the Da Nang Outcomes, which lay out pathways for ASEM for the implementation and monitoring of the Sendai Framework goals, the SDGs, and the Paris Agreement. The *Brussels Report* provides details on how ASEM’s connectivity activities can converge with the objectives of global development programmes and how the outcomes can be shared with intergovernmental organisations and subsidiary bodies in charge of monitoring the programmes and supporting capacity-building.

Asia-Europe connectivity stands reinforced and strengthened by effective multilateralism and a rules-based international order. ASEM's strength must reinforce the mandate and workings of multilateral institutions and governance mechanisms for trade, financial stability, and economic growth. 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 and the Group of Twenty, will be important for all ASEM members. The global and interconnected character of the global challenges calls for effective partnerships among countries, regions, and regional institutions. Asia and Europe can create institutional connectivity among their multilateral institutions and also jointly represent their concerns in global and regional multilateral mechanisms.

ASEM represents a group of countries that are facing many of the challenges confronting the global community – sustainable growth, income inequality, trade, climate change, disaster risks, and peace and security. ASEM's interlinkages with multilateral global governance organisations will reinforce both sides in resolving these challenges and strengthening ASEM's multilateral form.

Governments across the globe recognise connectivity's growing importance. The focus areas of ASEM connectivity – sustainable development, trade and economic cooperation, new areas of connectivity, peace and security, and bringing people closer – should stay close to inclusive development and adhere to the motto of 'leaving no one behind'. Doing so will also fulfil the theme of the 12th ASEM Summit: Global Partnerships for Global Challenges. The *Brussels Report* concludes that with these interlinkages in place, the time and direction are right for deepening and strengthening ASEM connectivity.