

# Message

## **H.E. Prak Sokhonn**

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**T**he Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is uniquely placed in fostering inter-regional relations. Asia and Europe need both interdependence and connectedness. The two partners are at a juncture where their opportunities and challenges are more common than ever before.

The 13th ASEM Summit (ASEM13) is a milestone in a quarter of a century of its existence, as the Partner countries are poised to take forward the economic, political, and social-cultural successes of this forum into a future-oriented blueprint of Asia-Europe cooperation and connectivity. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have reached every part of the world. Asia and Europe have borne the economic and social impacts of the pandemic with forbearance and courage. Coming out of the pandemic will be a long and difficult process. The hosting of the ASEM13 in Cambodia therefore assumes great significance. As the ASEM13 Chair, Cambodia brings forth an inclusive and prosperous growth pathway for the Asia-Europe region, through multilateral cooperation and sustainable development.

ASEM's commitment to build a cohesive, competitive, resilient, and sustainable ASEM community for the peoples of Asia and Europe is firm. However, the world that ASEM has to deal with over the next decade will be vastly different from that in which it has conducted its cooperation and connectivity activities thus far. Multiple connectivity plans, changes in multilateralism and global governance, digital transformation and the fourth industrial revolution. The increased role for women and youth in the economy are issues that must be interlinked with economic and social progress. Asia and Europe will also have to manage the risks from economic, technological, public health, and social change. A future-oriented mindset and approach, and a capacity to address changes and disruptions will help make the ASEM better prepared for the future, and ensure the sustainability of ASEM's gains from previous decades.

I congratulate the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) for developing this plenary study for the 13th ASEM Summit in Cambodia. The study brings forth ASEM region's preparedness towards the common opportunities and challenges in the focus areas for ASEM, and suggests ways to use ASEM's cooperation and connectivity mechanisms to achieve an inclusive, sustainable, and future-ready ASEM region. I hope that the ASEM Partner countries will use the study widely for reconnecting economies and societies in the post-pandemic world, and in mobilising Asia and Europe towards a connected, sustainable, and inclusive future.

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