

## CALL FOR ACTION

### ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

The 1<sup>st</sup> ASEF Young Leaders' Summit on "*Entrepreneurship and Youth Employment*" took place on 1-5 November 2015 in Luxembourg in conjunction with the 12<sup>th</sup> ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting (ASEM FMM12). On this occasion, more than 100 youth representatives from 51 ASEM member countries jointly developed a Call for Action addressed to the ASEM Governments to strengthen entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial spirit, and entrepreneurial skills to promote youth employment. The areas of action focus on the intersection of governments with corporate entities, social enterprises, start-ups, and education. At the ASEM FMM12 Opening Ceremony on 5 November 2015, 4 youth representatives handed over the Call for Action to the Chair of ASEM FMM12, H.E. Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission.

#### **PREAMBLE**

On-going socioeconomic changes in our societies have created complex challenges that, if left unaddressed, will limit the opportunities and ability of young people to contribute to innovation, job creation, and sustainable growth. Governments play a critical role in creating an enabling and supportive environment. We have identified 3 priorities to integrate into the ASEM Dialogue Process:

#### **1. CONNECTIVITY – CREATING PLATFORMS FOR ENTREPRENEURS**

We urge ASEM members to support connectivity of entrepreneurs through offline and online platforms that facilitate the exchange of information, ideas, resources, best practices, as well as creating networks.

Connectivity in these forms supports both individuals and the wider community of entrepreneurs, educators, policy-makers, and business people to solidify relationships, ensure sustainability, and achieve a common vision.

Existing multi-stakeholder platforms in the ASEM Process working towards this purpose should be continued - for instance the ASEF Rectors' Conference and Students' Forum (ARC). Ongoing ASEM initiatives and upcoming meetings such as the 5<sup>th</sup> ASEM Labour and Employment Ministers' Conference (ASEM LEMC5) to be held on 3-4 December 2015 in Bulgaria are ideal forums for ASEM members to invite and engage young entrepreneurs in providing input to the agenda.

To complement human connectivity, government-supported data sharing initiatives and online portals should be established to help facilitate cross-border networks, and improve access to markets, funds and human capital.

## **2. CULTURE – PROMOTING THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT**

We call on ASEM members to help generate an entrepreneurial culture within the ASEM community that promotes an entrepreneurial spirit throughout society. This culture creates the positive impact needed for an environment, which fosters creativity and brings about new opportunities.

ASEM members should further consider supporting initiatives that encourage social entrepreneurial endeavours and enhance social responsibility. Governments can facilitate entrepreneurship by raising the profile of successful role models through recognition, awards, and consistent government narratives.

## **3. CAPABILITIES – ENHANCING ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS**

We call on ASEM members to incorporate entrepreneurial skills early in the education process as an integral part of lifelong learning. Entrepreneurial skills are not only vital and applicable for entrepreneurs per se, but at all stages and levels of an individual's professional career and private life.

ASEM countries should support hands-on education initiatives for learners of all ages. Amongst others, these include student company programmes, work shadowing schemes, and other means of forging closer links between educational institutions and the private sector. ASEM members should also consider leveraging corporate expertise to provide quality internship and mentorship opportunities for young individuals.

These practical proposals could be reviewed and assessed by researchers and experts in ASEM countries, as has been done under the ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning (ASEM LLL Hub). Backed by evidence-based research, the outcomes and recommendations should be brought to the attention and consideration of the relevant ASEM Ministries.

## **CONCLUSION**

The above recommendations work towards one singular goal: supporting youth employment. For the ongoing dialogue on entrepreneurship and youth employment in Asia and Europe, the active participation of ASEM youth in the official ASEM process should be further encouraged and sustained.

We recognise the complexity of challenges linked with youth employment. Tackling this will require not only the efforts of ASEM Foreign Ministries and Ministries of Labour, Employment, or Education, but those of multiple stakeholders from diverse sectors. We also recognise that entrepreneurship will not be the only solution to address issues of youth employment. We do however believe that efforts to enhance connectivity, engender a stronger entrepreneurial spirit, and invest in the capabilities of youth by enhancing entrepreneurial skills, will give young people in Asia and Europe the ability to navigate and shape the future ahead.