

Young professionals discuss development

By Lee Joo-hee

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HANOI — With the importance of sustainable development growing stronger each day, young professionals of Europe and Asia gathered in Hanoi this week to confer on different aspects of the issue and to suggest international-level cooperation.

Young professionals from the member countries of the Asia-Europe Meeting were invited to a four-day forum in the Vietnamese capital, arranged by the Asia-Europe Foundation along with the National Committee for Youth of Vietnam and the Vietnam Center for Youth Development and Cooperation.

The event kicked off Monday with more than 60 young leaders participating from the age group of 25 to 35 and from various fields of government and civil society and was set to end tonight with a final statement proposing ways to achieve an international development mechanism that is durable and eco-friendly.

Sustainable development is generally known as development that fulfills the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

It thus concentrates on enhancing quality of life for all countries without using up natural resources beyond its capacity.

With the current rapid deterioration of natural resources, calls to adopt sustainable development have been growing around the world, which would require changing policies and practices on all levels of society, economy and environment both locally and internationally.

This annual event was aimed to pave way for youth from the continents of Europe and Asia to discuss on the subject, organizers said.

The forum is the third installment of the ASEM Youth Dialogue, which was established in 2002. The Youth Dialogue has been providing an arena for representatives of youth to engage in

debates on major international issues that form one of the key priorities in the ASEM dialogue process.

The past forums have touched on international cooperation on terrorism and other issues.

Discussion results have been composed into a joint statement and passed on to relevant organizations such as the headquarters of ASEM.

During the forum, the participants were given marathon sessions to exchange ideas on sustainable development in four different dimensions, including social, environmental, economic and institutional.

The dialogues mainly covered hunger and poverty alleviation, education, Asia/Europe perspectives on climate change, regional economies, youth employment, international cooperation and national development strategies.

Participants were divided into four working committees for the sake of more in-depth discussions on all four dimensions, the organizers said. The discussion results are to be released today.

"The ASEM Youth Dialogue is a great place to meet and exchange thoughts with people from various countries, an opportunity that you don't get easily" said Vitorio Cardoso from Portugal, who heads Youth Affairs, International Relations Department of the International Institute of Macau. It is his third time to participate in the Youth Dialogue, he said.

Other nationals joining the event included Chinese, Dutch, Finnish, Indonesian, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Malaysian, Filipinos, Singaporeans, Swedish, Thai, British and Vietnamese.

"The ASEM Youth Dialogue on sustainable development marks the continuation of an important process that ASEM helped initiate three years ago to provide an annual platform for youth in ASEM countries to meet and discuss thematic issue," said Zainal A. Mantaha, director of the ASEM People-to-People Exchange.

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