



FACTSHEET

ASEF Journalists' Colloquium series in conjunction with the ASEM Interfaith Dialogue

Introduction

1. The ASEF Journalists' Colloquium is a closed-door and informal event that allows participants to have candid discussions through an exchange of views and perspectives on the various complexities surrounding differences between religions or faiths.

Objectives

2. The Colloquium series serves to enhance the flow of information and exchange of perspectives on major inter-religious issues of common interest between practising journalists and experts in interfaith fields from Asia and Europe. At each Colloquium, key conclusions and recommendations are channelled to the ASEM Interfaith Dialogue as inputs from civil society. The Colloquium also aims to foster accurate, balanced and more analytical reporting about efforts in Asia and Europe to tackle sensitive issues. Participants are therefore invited to participate at the subsequent ASEM Interfaith Dialogue process.

Background

3. ASEF has organised five Journalists' Colloquia in conjunction with the ASEM Interfaith Dialogue:

1. **3rd ASEF Journalists' Colloquium**, *Building Interfaith Harmony through the Media* was held on 20-21 July 2005 in Bali, Indonesia, immediately preceding the inaugural ASEM Interfaith Dialogue. The event took place only days after the terrorist attacks in London on 7 July. Recommendations arising from this colloquium were submitted to the Interfaith Dialogue and subsequently reflected in the Bali Declaration that called for closer co-operation, mutual understanding and respect among religious communities in the world, especially in Asia and Europe.
2. **4th ASEF Journalists' Colloquium**, *Advancing Interfaith Understanding and Co-operation through the Media* was held in Larnaca, Cyprus, on 1-2 July 2006. The discussion took place against the backdrop of the controversial Prophet Muhammad cartoons and the Da Vinci Code movie. The outcomes of this Colloquium led to succinct interventions at the Media Working Group of the 2nd ASEM Interfaith Dialogue held at the same place. This contribution was commended in the Larnaca Action Plans.

3. **5th ASEF Journalists' Colloquium, *Deepening Interfaith Dialogue for Peace and Development*** was organised on 17-18 June 2007 in the city of Nanjing, China. It was held prior to the 3rd ASEM Interfaith Dialogue. For the first time, youth as well as religious leaders joined the discussion. The findings of this Colloquium were then presented at the 3rd ASEM Interfaith Dialogue working group on social cohesion and reflected in the Nanjing Statement on Interfaith Dialogue.
4. **6th ASEF Journalists' Colloquium, *Interfaith Reporting in the Advent of New Media – Exercising Rights with Responsibilities*** was held on 2-3 June 2008 in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, on the eve on the 4th ASEM Interfaith Dialogue. In the spirit of using new media, the first session of the Colloquium was also simultaneously web-cast to allow a broader audience to benefit from the presentations. Recommendations of the Colloquium were channelled to the 4th ASEM Interfaith Dialogue and earned a positive mention in the Amsterdam Statement on Interfaith Dialogue.
5. **7th ASEF Journalists' Colloquium, *Keeping the Faith: Reporting on Religion*** took place on 21-22 September 2009 in Seoul, Republic of Korea, in conjunction with the 5th ASEM Interfaith Dialogue. To address the apparent antagonism between religion leaders and the media, senior religious leaders and religious affairs correspondents proposed methods for bridging this divide. Their recommendations were incorporated as an official Annex to the Seoul Statement on Interfaith Dialogue.

Outcomes

4. Recommendations: The recommendations by participants of the Colloquium channelled to the ASEM Interfaith Dialogue are the most significant outcome. ASEF's contribution to the ASEM Interfaith Dialogue has thus received positive acknowledgement in all the past ASEM Statements and Declarations on Interfaith Dialogue.
5. Press coverage: The journalists who are from leading media agencies in Asia and Europe, often published their reports/articles on the ASEF Colloquium, the ASEM Interfaith Dialogue, and interfaith relations in general.
6. Intangible outcomes: Participants feedback showed that they valued the networking and contact-building with fellow participants of the Journalists' Colloquium series. Participants from different sectors (e.g, religious leaders and activists, media professionals and academics) recognised the need to engage each other and to build trust between them.