



ASEF Press Release

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Madrid Statement calls for Interfaith Dialogue to reach general public and emphasises media has indispensable role

The Madrid Statement for ASEM Interfaith Dialogue, issued at the conclusion of the 6th ASEM Interfaith Dialogue on 9 April 2010, has called for dialogue among leaders and religious groups to reach the general public. This would help to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts, religious or otherwise. The ASEM members said that in this regard, media had an indispensable role in helping to reduce prejudices and effectively bring interfaith dialogue to the broader public.

The meeting also noted that it was important to encourage the implementation of proposals of the recently concluded 8th ASEF Journalists' Colloquium ("Youth, Media and Interfaith: Sharing Knowledge, Building Trust") which was meant to assist governments, religious groups and the media to promote respect and mutual knowledge.

The proposals by the participants included the call to news media to build their own knowledge of religion, recognising it as a specialised area of coverage that requires the same depth and attentiveness that they traditionally give to politics and business.

Media professionals should also be more creative and use more of the journalistic repertoire to cover religious issues, such as human-interest stories, features, opinion columns or interviews. The guidance on how to cover religion is essential and should be included in professional codes of ethics.

At the same time, religious communities must improve their understanding on how media work, in order to reach out to the public more effectively.

The participants also emphasised that on-going, regular dialogues and networking between religious groups and media were essential for trust-building and fruitful cooperation. The Internet can also provide space for them to meet, being an important social platform and a powerful communications tool.

These and other recommendations by participants of the 8th ASEF Journalists' Colloquium were incorporated in the Madrid Statement on ASEM Interfaith Dialogue.

Organised by the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) and Casa Asia, and with support of Paramadina University, the 8th Journalists' Colloquium took place on 5-6 April

2010 in Madrid, immediately preceding the 6th ASEM Interfaith Dialogue, held on 7-9 April 2010 in Madrid/Toledo.

For more details on the 6th ASEM Interfaith Dialogue, please visit:

<http://www.aseinfoboard.org/Calendar/Activities/?id=303>

For more details on the 8th ASEM Journalists' Colloquium, please visit:

www.asef.org/index.php?option=com_project&task=view&id=628



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