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## **PRESS STATEMENT**

The Asia-Europe Foundation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam will be co-organising the Seventh Asia-Europe Young Leaders Symposium (AEYLS VII) from 24 to 29 August 2003 in Ho Chi Minh City.

About 80 leaders of tomorrow from the 25 countries that form the ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) dialogue process<sup>1</sup> will gather in Ho Chi Minh City to discuss issues arising under the theme, "Strengthening Asia-Europe Co-Operation: Opportunities and Challenges in the Emerging New Global Context". They come from different sectors and include members of parliament, government officials, businessmen and entrepreneurs, academics, educators and researchers, journalists, cultural workers and civil society leaders.

For six days in Ho Chi Minh City, the Asia-Europe Young Leaders will be discussing the different dimensions of Asia-Europe relations, including the political and security challenges confronting Asia and Europe in the new global context. They will also discuss new ideas for enhancing Asia-Europe economic co-operation, contribute to the ASEM dialogue on cultures and civilisations, identify new modalities to promote biregional co-operation in education and human resource development and find ways to strengthen the ASEM dialogue framework, particularly in preparation for possible enlargement. Significantly, these were some of the issues identified as priorities by ASEM Leaders at their last summit held in Copenhagen, Denmark, in September 2002 (ASEM 4).

Exchanges among Asia-Europe Young Leaders form an important part of efforts made under the ASEM framework and by the Asia-Europe Foundation in particular, to foster greater awareness and understanding between the two regions at the people-to-people level. The symposium offers a unique opportunity for a select and dynamic group of young people from the two regions to contribute substantively to the ASEM process. The views and recommendations on the issues to be discussed during the Seventh Asia-Europe Young Leaders Symposium in Ho Chi Minh City will be subsequently submitted to the ASEM governments for their consideration.

The Asia-Europe Young Leaders Symposium is part of annual series of meetings organised by the Asia-Europe Foundation in collaboration with different partner

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<sup>1</sup> ASEM comprises 26 partners: (10 from Asia) Brunei, China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam; (16 from Europe) Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the European Commission.

organisations in venues alternating between Asia and Europe. The idea for such a forum was first proposed by Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto at the first ASEM held in Bangkok in March 1996. Since the inauguration of the symposium in 1997, about 500 Asia-Europe Young Leaders from different professional backgrounds have participated in and contributed to the dialogue process.

The fact that the seventh edition of the Symposium is being held in Vietnam is of particular significance. With the strong desire to further contribute to the strengthening of the Asia-Europe partnership, Vietnam will be hosting the next biennial meeting of ASEM Leaders - ASEM 5 - in October 2004.

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For more information, please contact Laurent Frideres at:  
Email: [laurent@asef.org](mailto:laurent@asef.org)  
Telephone: +65 6874 9712