



# P R E S S   R E L E A S E

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## **Asia-Europe Civil Society Consultation on Environment: a First**

Lecce, Italy - The **Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)** reported on the roundtable “Finding the Path from Johannesburg” to the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Senior Officials Meeting of the **ASEM Environment Ministerial** meeting, on 11 October 2003 in Lecce, Italy. The resulting chairman's summary of the ministerial meeting states:

*"Ministers welcomed the Asia-Europe Environment Forum launched in June 2003 by the Asia-Europe Foundation .... as providing an opportunity for informal consultation among civil society stakeholders on the implementation of the World Summit for Sustainable Development".*

The roundtable was the **first informal Civil Society consultation held on the environment** under the ASEM process. It was held barely 2 weeks before the ASEM Environment Ministerial meeting held in Bangkok, Thailand.

ASEF Director for Intellectual Exchange Bertrand Fort, who conveyed the Civil Society recommendations arising from the roundtable, said in Lecce: *“For the first time, Civil Society representatives from Asia and Europe were consulted on fundamental issues such as the environment by the 25 governments of ASEM and the European Commission. Civil society, industries, and governments across Asia and Europe have a joint stake in environmental issues, and in the Kyoto Protocol in particular. With the Forum, Asians and Europeans can make a difference in making this process a showcase of Asia-Europe partnership and a platform for dialogue among cultures”.*

Asia-Europe co-operation on sustainable development can and must advance as **genuine partnerships among all the stakeholders: civil society, including private sector and local sector civil society, and governments**, the meeting concluded. Moreover, it was agreed that ASEM is the best platform for this process. The Ministers of Environment were asked to engage in deeper partnerships with civil society stakeholders of Asia and Europe in the following areas: convergence in multi-sectoral strategies for sustainable development, networking, communication strategies, capacity-building, monitoring and evaluation, and allocation of resources.

The roundtable was the first event of the **Asia-Europe Environment Forum**, a series of roundtables on specific environmental concerns. <http://env.asef.org>

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ASEF was created in February 1997 by members of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). It is based in Singapore and reports to a Board of 26 Governors comprising representatives from: Austria, Belgium, Brunei, China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Netherlands, Philippines, Portugal, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom, Vietnam and the European Commission.

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