



ASIA-EUROPE ENVIRONMENT FORUM



Asia-Europe Lecture Tour "PURSUING SUSTAINABILITY IN ASIA: CHALLENGES, APPROACHES AND GOOD PRACTICES"

by Ella Antonio
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ABSTRACT

Two decades ago, the sustainable development concept was introduced and since then, initiatives to operationalise it have been undertaken at all levels all over the world. Two major global forums, the UN Conference on Environment and Development (1992) and the World Summit for Sustainable Development (2002), brought forward commitments among countries and governments to pursue and attain sustainability in order to alleviate global poverty and improve living standards. However, there still remain potent issues in incorporating environment into the larger framework of development, which is seen as the key to attaining the twin objectives of poverty alleviation and environmental sustainability. Some of the issues and weaknesses that have been raised include the following:

- Lack of awareness and ability to put sustainable development into operation;
- Absence of clear and coherent strategy for attaining sustainability at all levels;
- Lack of stakeholder participation in development processes (planning; policy-making; program/project development and implementation; and monitoring and evaluation);
- Weak governance structure and processes that impede the formulation and implementation of plans, strategies and policies that consider and synchronize economic development, social equity and environmental sustainability
- Inadequate capability to learn and use suitable tools/approaches for integration or mainstreaming

The lecture shall highlight the challenges and experiences of selected Asian countries in pursuing sustainable development.

Firstly, the speaker shall examine how some Asian countries developed their National Sustainable Development Strategies. How has environment been fitted into the strategies of socio-economic development? In light of increasing concerns on climate change, just how far have Asian governments gone to incorporate these into their plans and strategies?

Moving the discussion further, the lecture will look at the institutional mechanisms that are in place to ensure coordination of formulation and implementation of national strategies. Are these mechanisms sufficient or working well? How are the strategies and policies implemented, monitored and evaluated?

Can there be lessons learnt from the Asian examples? The lecturer encourages feedback from the audience in order to compare and contrast these experiences with those in European countries. The lecture is aimed to serve as a platform for knowledge sharing between Asia and Europe.

PROFILE OF SPEAKER



Ella Antonio is the President of Earth Council Asia-Pacific, an international NGO that has been promoting sustainable development mainly through multi-stakeholder participation and partnerships in various aspects of governance. She is also actively involved as Trustee and Officer of two NGOs based in the Philippines; the EARTH Institute Asia and pagbabago@pilipinas, both of which promote ethical and participatory governance in environmental management and sustainable development.

She is also the President of Brain Trust: Knowledge and Options for Sustainable Development, Inc., a Philippine-based think tank that conducts research studies and human resource development for government, private sector and international development institutions.

She had an extensive career in the public service rising from Research Engineer to Chief of Staff of the Minister for Socioeconomic Planning at the National Economic and Development Authority, the Philippine development policy and planning agency. Said career spanned development economics and finance, industrial policy and planning, natural resources management, science and technology policy, and all forms of development planning.

A B.S. Metallurgical Engineering graduate of the University of the Philippines, she pursued a Program in Development Economics and post graduate course in Industrial Engineering Management. She received scholarships and training in development policy and planning and natural resources management in various institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (USA), East West Center (USA), and International Development Center (Japan).

ABOUT THE ASIA-EUROPE FOUNDATION

The **Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)** seeks to promote better mutual understanding and closer cooperation between the people of Asia and Europe through greater intellectual, cultural, and people-to-people exchanges. These exchanges include conferences, lecture tours, workshops, seminars and the use of web-based platforms. The major achievement of ASEF is the establishment of permanent bi-regional networks focussed on areas and issues that help to strengthen Asia-Europe relations.

Established in February 1997 by the partners of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)¹, ASEF reports to a board of governors representing the ASEM partners. ASEF is the only permanent physical institution of the ASEM process. Having completed over 310 projects, involving over 13,500 individuals ('ASEF Alumni'), ASEF works in partnership with other public institutions and civil society actors to ensure its work is broad-based and balanced among the partner countries.

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This particular lecture is organised under the ASEF Environment and Sustainable Development Series. The Series is a platform to promote cooperation in environment and sustainable development issues in Asia and Europe.

¹ ASEM (the Asia-Europe Meeting) is an informal process of dialogue and cooperation. It brings together Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Laos, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mongolia, Myanmar, The Netherlands, Pakistan, The Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom, Vietnam, the ASEAN Secretariat and the European Commission. <http://www.aseminfoboard.org>