

43rd ASEF Board of Governors Meeting

Opening Remarks

23 June 2022, Bangkok, Thailand.



Opening Remarks Amb. Toru MORIKAWA ASEF Executive Director.

Thank you, Dr Darnp SUKONTASAP. It is my honour to share this stage with you.

Excellencies, Distinguished Governors, dear young leaders, alumni and friends of ASEF,

Welcome to the celebration of the 25th anniversary of ASEF's establishment. I would like to express our deep gratitude to the MFA Thailand for hosting the first in person Board of Governors since the start of the pandemic and this wonderful commemoration event.

Back in March 1996, in this very remarkable city of Bangkok, ten leaders from East Asia met with their sixteen European counterparts at the 1st ASEM Summit (ASEM1). One of the key outcomes of that meeting was an agreement to establish ASEF in Singapore. ASEF was officially launched at a ceremony which coincided with the 1st meeting of the ASEM Foreign Ministers, in Singapore in 1997.

Since then, ASEF has been fulfilling its mandate in building bridges to connect the people of the two regions based on mutual understanding through intellectual, cultural and people-to-people exchange, as the only permanent institution of the ASEM Process.

On this note, I would like to express my deep gratitude to all our members, alumni and partners who have contributed to ASEF's many achievements over the last 25 years.

After 25 years of its establishment, now ASEF is facing the unprecedented challenges such as the covid pandemic, the serious geopolitical situation, the economic turmoil such as accelerating inflation. ASEM, our mothership framework is temporarily on hold. This situation leads us to diving into deep into the thoughts on our basic mission.

How do we find a common ground for dialogue in the new conditions? How do we construct meaningful exchanges and equal partnerships between the peoples of the two regions? While it is true that we have been thinking together these questions through our different projects over a quarter century, the importance of the these questions are renewed now.

When we feel lost in the trail, the first step to do is to go back to the starting point. I believe that it is historic that we gather here in Bangkok, Thailand, the starting point of ASEM and ASEF, at the occasion of the 25th anniversary, to kick start again to think together to revisit our cornerstone – which is to serve as a platform for Asia-Europe dialogue. The importance of dialogue wherein we actively listen to each other is now even more essential.

We believe ASEF has an important part to play to support people-to-people exchange through the collective efforts in search for a renewed architecture to bridge the two

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regions and, we would like to renew our commitment to the dialogue between Asian and European together with you, here today.

This is the reason why I invite all our stakeholders to continue to support ASEF as we embark on a new chapter looking forward to the next 25 years.

Thank you!

Amb. Toru MORIKAWA
ASEF Executive Director