



THE INFORMAL ASEM SEMINAR
on Human Rights





About the Informal Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Seminar on Human Rights

The **Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)** is an intergovernmental forum established in 1996 to deepen relations between Asia and Europe, fostering dialogue and cooperation on political, economic, and socio-cultural issues of mutual interest.

Launched in 1997 during the 1st ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting (ASEM FMM1), the **Informal ASEM Seminar on Human Rights** serves as a unique platform for open, balanced, and non-confrontational dialogue between civil society and government representatives from ASEM partner countries.

The Seminar series is co-organised by the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), the Raoul Wallenberg Institute, and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, Switzerland, and the People's Republic of China, with additional financial support from the European Union and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

Past Seminar Topics

- ▶ *Access to Justice; Regional & National Particularities in the Administration of Justice; Monitoring the Administration of Justice (December 1997, Lund, Sweden)*
- ▶ *Differences in Asian & European Values; Rights to Education; Rights of Minorities (June 1999, Beijing, China)*
- ▶ *Freedom of Expression & Right to Information; Humanitarian Intervention & the Sovereignty of States; Is there a Right to a Healthy Environment? (June 2000, Paris, France)*
- ▶ *Freedom of Conscience & Religion; Democratisation, Conflict Resolution & Human Rights; Rights & Obligations in the Promotion of Social Welfare (July 2001, Bali, Indonesia)*
- ▶ *Economic Relations; Rights of Multinational Companies & Foreign Direct Investments (May 2003, Lund, Sweden)*
- ▶ *International Migrations; Protection of Migrants, Migration Control & Management (September 2004, Suzhou, China)*
- ▶ *Human Rights & Ethnic, Linguistic & Religious Minorities (February 2006, Budapest, Hungary)*
- ▶ *Human Rights & Freedom of Expression (September 2007, Siem Reap, Cambodia)*
- ▶ *Human Rights in Criminal Justice Systems (February 2009, Strasbourg, France)*
- ▶ *Human Rights & Gender Equality (July 2010, Manila, Philippines)*
- ▶ *National & Regional Human Rights Mechanisms (November 2011, Prague, Czech Republic)*
- ▶ *Human Rights & Information & Communication Technologies (June 2012, Seoul, Korea)*
- ▶ *Human Rights & the Environment (October 2013, Copenhagen, Denmark)*
- ▶ *Human Rights & Businesses (November 2014, Hanoi, Viet Nam)*
- ▶ *Human Rights & Trafficking in Persons (November 2015, Montreux, Switzerland)*
- ▶ *Persons with Disabilities & Human Rights (November 2016, Beijing, China)*
- ▶ *Human Rights & Children (November 2017, Sofia, Bulgaria)*
- ▶ *Human Rights & Prevention of Violent Extremism (November 2018, Yogyakarta, Indonesia)*
- ▶ *Human Rights Education & Training (November 2019, Tromsø, Norway)*
- ▶ *Human Rights of Older Persons (February 2021, Online/ Seoul, Korea)*
- ▶ *Human Rights & Climate Change (March 2022, Online/ Luxembourg)*
- ▶ *Human Rights & Poverty Reduction (2024, Bangkok, Thailand)*
- ▶ *Human Rights & Artificial Intelligence (2025, Copenhagen, Denmark)*



Organisation

The Seminar series is co-organised by the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), the Raoul Wallenberg Institute (nominated by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs), the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. ASEF has acted as the Secretariat of the Seminar since 2000.

Supervision of the Seminar is entrusted to a Steering Committee, composed of the Seminar's 5 co-organisers as well as representatives of Indonesia and of the European Union.

Contact us at humanrights.seminar@asef.org

About the 23rd edition of the Seminar series

The Informal Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Seminar on Human Rights series is an annual human rights dialogue among selected civil society participants and government representatives from **51 Asian and European countries**, the European Union and the ASEAN Secretariat. The aim of this initiative is to promote mutual understanding and cooperation between Asia and Europe in the area of political dialogue, particularly on human rights issues.

The Seminar provides an informal platform for non-confrontational exchange of ideas and practices related to human rights issues, and an opportunity to elaborate on recommendations to further civil society engagement, government action and their collaboration. Established in 1997, the series has become a cornerstone of interregional engagement on human rights.

Each edition brings together around **100 participants** over three days, featuring an **Opening Plenary** with keynote addresses, **parallel Working Group sessions**, and a **Closing Plenary**.

The 23rd Seminar will be hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

About the Participants

This is an **invitation-only event**. Participants are selected by the co-organisers and include:

- **Civil society representatives** (human rights practitioners, NGOs, academics, researchers, and think tanks)
- **Government officials** nominated by ASEM partners
- **Representatives of National Human Rights Institutes (NHRIs)**
- **International and intergovernmental organisations**

Each Working Group will consist of approximately **25-30 participants**, ensuring diversity in expertise, gender, region, and institutional background.

Pre-Seminar Preparation



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Before the Seminar, a **Background Paper** is prepared by the **Lead Rapporteur**, providing the analytical foundation for all discussions.

Participants are expected to **read the Background Paper in advance** and indicate their preferred **Working Group** during registration. View a **sample Seminar publication**, including the Background Paper, [here](#).

Working Groups

Working Group sessions are held as **closed-door discussions** on the second day of the Seminar. Participants are assigned to a group based on their preference, expertise, and diversity considerations. Full participation in assigned Working Group sessions is required.

Each Working Group will:

1. **Identify gaps** in legislation, policies, and programmes at the **national, regional, or international levels**.
2. Share **lessons learned, promising practices, and challenges** in integrating human rights in relation to the specific topic.
3. Formulate **concrete, forward-looking recommendations**, guided by the Concept Note questions and the Background Paper.

All Working Group discussions follow the **Chatham House Rule** to ensure open and candid exchange without individual attribution.

Role of Moderator & Rapporteurs

Moderators:

- Guide the discussion and introduce objectives, methods, and time structure.
- Ensure balanced participation and prevent dominance or self-promotion.
- Lead the group in addressing key questions and forming conclusions.

Rapporteurs:

- Record key points, outcomes, and recommendations.
- Collaborate with the Moderator to produce a **Working Group Report**.
- Draft the **first version of recommendations** within one week after the Seminar.

These recommendations are delivered during the **Closing Plenary** and compiled into the Seminar's official outputs.

Note-Taking & Recordings

Dedicated **note-takers** will document discussions in writing. Sessions may also be audio or video recorded for internal purposes to support accurate reporting and analysis.

Post-Seminar Outputs

The Seminar generates two key outputs:

- **Key Messages:** A concise summary of recommendations shared with all 53 ASEM Partners.

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- **Seminar Report:** A comprehensive summary of all Working Group discussions.

These outcomes are disseminated to a broader audience and inform follow-up capacity-building activities and outreach events.

