**Minutes**

**8th ASEM Education Ministers’ Meeting (ASEMME8)**

**December 15, 2021**

**Online, hosted by Thailand**

**Bangkok, Thailand**

The Eighth ASEM Education Ministers’ Meeting (hereinafter referred to as the ASEMME8) was held virtually at the Ministry of Education, Bangkok, Thailand on December 15, 2021. The Meeting was hosted by the Ministry of Education of Thailand, in cooperation with the Minister of **Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation of Thailand.**

One hundred and Twenty Six Participants from thirteen countries from Europe (Austria, Belgium, France, Finland, Czech Republic, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands Romania, the Russian Federation and Switzerland) and thirteen countries from Asia (Brunei Darussalam, India, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, People's Republic of China, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam) and representatives from UNESCO Bangkok, EU SHARE, Asia-Europe Foundation, Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Research, European University Association, Ministère de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, Ministry of Education and Training, Belgium, and ASEM Education Secretariat attended the meeting.

The Meeting focused on each Minister’s Statement on the Four ASEM Education Strategic Objectives for the Next Decade, the Round-table on Minister’s commitments to support the ASEM Education Strategy 2030, the formal adoption of the Strategy and Action Plan 2030 and the ASEMME 8 Chair’s Conclusions.

The Meeting was chaired by Her Excellency Ms. Treenuch Thienthong, Minister of Education, Thailand.

1. **Opening Session**

Her Excellency Ms. Treenuch Thienthong, Minister of Education of Thailand delivered Opening Remarks. She welcomed ASEM Ministers to the Eighth ASEM Education Ministers’ Meeting or ASEMME8, virtually held in Bangkok, Thailand. She mentioned that the Meeting would spotlight challenges in education development and come up with continued joint efforts in achieving the common objectives in the ASEM Education Strategy for 2030 and ASEM Education Action Plan 2030. She highlighted the importance of the ASEM Education Ministers’ Meeting which aimed to advance educational collaboration focusing on the four priorities for education, namely quality assurance and recognition, engaging businesses and industry in education, balanced mobility and lifelong learning and technical and vocational education and training.

She also mentioned that COVID-19 lockdowns had had a huge impact on education worldwide. In Thailand, the country had been strengthening capacity in the use of big data in learning management systems to improve teaching and learning to be more effective and efficient. The country undertook special measures to ensure health and safety in schools, as well as vaccinating students, teachers and other staff members to bring back all students to school. Moreover, a blended learning approach was introduced to ensure that all learners have access to digital learning content to improve their learning outcomes.

She said that Thailand’s education system remained focused on ensuring that its citizens could develop necessary skills for the 21st century and embrace a lifelong learning philosophy. The country continued to support connectivity between Asian and European students to exchange experiences and educational resources. She highlighted the ASEM Workshop on Youth Learners’ Mobility in an Agile World: An SDG14 “Life Below Water”, held in September 2021, was a good example of collaboration on how to utilize digital platforms to create virtual mobile learning in ASEM. Moreover, she also said that Thailand placed an emphasis on technical and vocational training to prepare individuals to acquire practical skills for the world of work. She also highlighted the importance of higher education and the country would support quality assurance systems within all public and private higher education institutions, which included collaborative research, cross-cultural exchanges, faculty mobility and student mobility.

**2. Ministers’ Statements on the Four ASEM Education Strategic Objectives for the Next Decade.**

Her Excellency Ms. Treenuch Thienthong, Minister of Education of Thailand chaired the Meeting. She mentioned that the Meeting would offer an opportunity for Ministers to share knowledge and insightful points of view to achieve the vision of the ASEM Education Process and its strategic objectives for the next decade. Those objectives stated that *“By 2030, the ASEM Education Process will contribute to a more prosperous, resilient and sustainable Asia-Europe education region that is better prepared for current and forthcoming global challenges*”. To realize this vision, four strategic objectives for the next decade were 1) enhancing Connectivity between Asia and Europe by Boosting inclusive and balanced mobility and exchange, 2) promoting lifelong learning, including technical and vocational education and training, 3) fostering the development of skills and competences and 4) creating more transparency and mutual understanding on recognition, validation and quality assurance.

The Chair, then, invited the Ministers to share their views in each Strategic Objective as follows:

**2.1** **Strategic Objective 1 “Enhancing Connectivity between Asia and Europe by Boosting Inclusive and Balanced Mobility and Exchanges.** The session was joined by Her Excellency Ms. Yoo Eun-hae, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education of the Republic of Korea and Ambassador Toru Morkawa, ASEF Executive Director.

**Her Excellency Ms. Yoo Eun-hae** mentioned that the year 2021 marked the 25th anniversary of ASEM. Since the inaugural ASEM Education Minister’s Meeting in 2008, ASEM Member Countries had contributed to expanding people-to-people exchanges between Asia and Europe. Connectivity between Asia and Europe by boosting inclusive and balanced mobility and exchanges under the ASEM process, including people-to-people exchanges had been promoted to facilitate both physical and online exchanges between Asia and Europe. She underlined the importance of the ASEM-DUO Fellowship Programme, adopted at the 3rd ASEM Summit in October 2000 jointly proposed by Korea, France and Singapore. More than 4,400 students had benefitted over the past two decades, effectively laying the groundwork for establishing a partnership between Asia and Europe in pursuit of a more permanent and balanced people-to-people exchange. She mentioned that with the adoption of the Seoul Declaration at the 6th ASEM Education Ministers’ Meeting in 2017, ASEM partners noted digital technology as an innovation education and learning tool and announced their commitments to strengthening education cooperation by using digital technology, which culminated with the adoption of the ASEM MOOC initiative. The ASEM MOOC initiative was on the forefront of promoting an inclusive and balanced exchange by offering access to quality education and customized learning specifically adjusted to individual levels and closing the educational gap between Asia and Europe. She encouraged all ASEM partners to take part in the ASEM DUO-Fellowship Programme and the ASEM MOOC Initiative for an inclusive and balanced exchange between Asia and Europe. She mentioned that ASEM would continue to advocate for not only physical exchange, but also blended and virtual mobility and exchanges by actively tapping into new digital and telecommunication tools. To overcoming the global crisis of COVID-19, it was a time to develop flexible and sustainable development of education in Asia and Europe by promoting trans-regional and multilateral cooperation.

**Ambassador Toru Morkawa** emphasized diversity and inclusion as core values of ASEF. He mentioned that the first ASEM Education Strategic Objective - Enhancing Connectivity between Asia and Europe by Boosting Inclusive and Balanced Mobility and Exchanges – was one of ASEF’s top priorities and an area that ASEM had promoted and would promote through our long-term, interdisciplinary programmes and various activities. According to the ASEM Education Strategy 2030, inclusive and balanced mobility needed to be addressed in all forms and in various contexts: (higher) education, TVET (technical and vocational training) and lifelong learning (LLL), workplaces, non-formal settings, short exchange programmes and projects. Geographical balance and the engagement of stakeholders of diverse backgrounds, inclusive and balanced mobility also touched on aspects such as learning outcomes and recognition, an in-depth intercultural exchange characterized by mutual understanding and respect, as well as financial and environmental sustainability. The global pandemic had caused a drastic change of focus. Efforts and plans for virtual or blended mobility opened new avenues and perspectives of exchange, including new types and forms of delivery to include educators and learners in different locations, time zones and backgrounds. The accelerated move to online and hybrid teaching and learning appeared as a new era for internationalization. The opportunities offered by technologies, however, would soon expose similar challenges & risks for inclusion, equity and balanced mobility and exchanges: existing inequalities to access education prevailed and among other issues, digital inequality became even more acute.

He emphasized the support of ASEF on many initiatives planned by ASEM Education Stakeholders under the first strategy priority and ASEM Action Plan such as 1) The ASEM-DUO Fellowship programme 2) The World Access to Higher Education Day and its annual conference by the National Education Opportunity Network and 3) The EU-Share programme.

**2.2** **Strategic Objective 2 “Promoting Lifelong Learning, including Technical and Vocational Education and Training”.** The session was joined by His Excellency Mr. Tuomo Pumala, State Secretary to Minister of Science and Culture of Finland and His Excellency Professor Dr. Zaw Myint, Deputy Minister of Education of Myanmar and His Excellency Mr. Nepomuceno Malaluan, Undersecretary and Chief of Staff, Department of Education, Philippines

**His Excellency Mr. Tuomo Puumala** mentioned in his Statement that the valuable, long-term work carried out in the ASEM Education Process was reflected in the Education Strategy 2030 and other meeting documents. The documents also reflected the current developments such as green and digital transformation which were having a profound impact on the world of work and learning. To respond to existing and future challenges, broad cooperation and sharing good practices across our regions was needed more than ever. The challenges along with the rapid digitalization and technological development caused education to focus more on lifelong learning. In Finland, the country used the concept of continuous learning instead of lifelong learning. The focus was on upskilling and reskilling.  The challenge of continuous learning required a comprehensive and systemic approach for developing education and learning. The whole education system must be more flexible so that learning could be truly continuous and unlimited and took into account various learning needs. With society and the world of work changing, learning taking place beyond the education system – in workplaces, in recreational activities and in leisure time, closer cooperation between education and working life was necessary, as highlighted also in the ASEM Education Strategy 2030. By promoting continuous learning, we would strengthen the relevance and impact of competence, education and research-based knowledge throughout our society.

He also highlighted the important role of higher education institutions in continuous learning. These institutions were encouraged to open up their educational offerings and to develop the higher education system as a continuous learning platform. Finnish higher education institutions had actively engaged in promoting continuous learning. They had developed new flexible opportunities for continuous learning as well as digital services to support their utilization. Through digitalization, the supply of higher education institutions was opening up for wider participation

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**His Excellency Prof. Dr. Zaw Myint** mentioned that lifelong learning, whether by formal or non-formal means, was the key to gaining employment and income stability. Lifelong Learning opportunities were viewed as the “master key” that opens the doors to poverty alleviation, greater social justice, equity, peace building and sustainable development. In reality, Lifelong Learning and TVET Education were the two sides of the same coin. Technical and Vocational Education and Training was a part of a lifelong learning continuum, which provided learners not only initial training, but also upskilling and reskilling opportunities. We firmly believed that the TVET system would equip learners with the necessary knowledge and skills to achieve their career aspirations and contribute to the nation’s socio-economic development.

During the years 2016 - 2020, the Ministry of Education of Myanmar produced 123,000 TVET students. The quality of TVET in Myanmar was highly uneven due to the inadequately trained teachers, outdated learning practices and obsolete equipment. In the year 2015, the Ministry of Science and Technology was merged with the Ministry of Education. However, it was separated from the Ministry of Education again in June 2021. The Ministry of Education was planning to reintroduce vocational training courses, especially diploma and degree courses. In addition, the National Education Strategic Plan-NESP (2021-2030) had also given priority to increasing Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All. About 70% of the total population of Myanmar lived in rural areas, and most of them were farmers. Manufacturing Value-Added Products had become one of its priorities. In relation to this, attempts had been made to ensure that the TVET institutions guarantee to conduct comprehensive strategic activities that would strengthen linkages between the educational system and the labour market, promote institute-industry engagement, and generate the skills and expertise that would support designing and implementing effective strategies for value-added marketing. Myanmar was pleased to learn from experiences and best practices on Lifelong Learning including TVET that would enable their people to actively contribute to the sustainable development of the ASEM Region.

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| **His Excellency Mr. Nepomuceno Malaluan** emphasized that the Philippines strongly supported the vision and strategic objectives of ASEM Education 2030 and its Action Plan. He mentioned that ASEM Education 2030 within the context of COVID-19, had proved to be a double-edged sword for education. On one side, it had disrupted education operations and imposed considerable stress on the organizational, infrastructure, and human components of the system. On the other side, it had exposed the weakness in our existing systems to adapt to situations such as the pandemic. In relation to this, he said that there was a need to deal with learning recovery as we moved back to whatever the new normal holds for us. He also emphasized the centrality of lifelong learning, including TVET, as an overarching framework for education. We needed to provide learning opportunities not only in formal education but in numerous settings, including the workplace, the home, and in socio-economic settings within and beyond national borders, to facilitate continuous learning, upskilling and reskilling throughout life. He also mentioned that it was essential for businesses and industry to share responsibility and engage in curriculum, learning spaces, learning and training opportunities, and recognition of learning, as this would be a key factor in attaining vision for the future. In his conclusion, he emphasized the importance of intra- and trans-regional collaboration in research, knowledge sharing, and concrete initiatives that would foster more resilient, prosperous and sustainable futures for all people and nations in ASEM regions and across the world.**2.3 Fostering the Development of Skills and Competences.** The session was joined by His Excellecy Mr. Nadiem Anwar Makarim, Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, of Indonesia, and Her Excellency Dr. J Caruana, Minister of Education of Malta.

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| **His Excellency Mr. Nadiem Anwar Makarim** began his Statement by mentioning that apart from the formal role of Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, he was also the leader of the emancipated learning movement in Indonesia. He mentioned that the most important principle for education reform in Indonesia was the involvement of key stakeholders to take part in education. Education reform must be driven at the grassroots level. In his views, education management could not be sustained without the participation of important stakeholders which included cooperation from schools, principals, teachers and students. He emphasized the important of a student-centred learning approach, which is the fundamental principle of the emancipated learning movement. The core pillar of the movement consisted of the changes of teacher’s training, principal’s leadership development and curriculum, assessment. The primary requirement of learners to become successful in the future was to make the learners become a self-driven and lifelong learner. The holistic transformation of education was focused on how for student could have essential skills and competencies needed to cope with worldwide challenges. Schools must be engaged in providing relevant courses to their students. Students learned various subjects and took in a lot of information but did not learn how to apply their knowledge to solve problems outside school. The Emancipated Learning Movement focused on project-based learning support and allowed learners to be the center of their self-learning, to be developed, and to cultivate real world skills. He also underlined the importance of teamwork, creativity, critical thinking skills and the ability to see difference and diversity. This would enable children to cope with future challenges. |

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**Her Excellency Dr. J. Caruana** started her Statement by welcoming the ASEM Education Strategy 2030 paper and recognized the need for greater collaboration. She mentioned that globalization and technological revolutions were transforming ASEM’s economies, so we needed to develop skills, solid knowledge and greater responsibility. Education systems needed to help young people to be able to contribute to the development of their own competencies and to integrate fully into the social cultural environment. Research and innovation were key concepts that fitted together with knowledge-based economies and the mortar strategy aimed at embedding research and innovation at the heart of our economy to encourage knowledge driven and value added growth to sustain improvements in the quality of life of all citizens.

In a post pandemic world, emphasis was particularly being made on digital and green transitions and the skills needed for a sustainable transition, which left no one behind. Moving forward, a human centric approach towards an inclusive labor market was needed to tackle skill mismatches and ensured that individuals were equipped with necessary transversal skills to enter into gainful and sustainable employment. This could be achieved by means of quality upskilling and reskilling measures. She reiterated that lifelong learning provisions needed to be enhanced to help workers reskill throughout all their working lives. Malta recently launched its national strategy for lifelong learning 2020 - 2030 with the goal of making it easier for adults to continue learning through innovative approaches. Learners would also be supported in developing learning pathways to be facilitated through self-assessed learning that would allow adults to self-assess their literacy, numeracy and digital skills. The country would also be implementing the INTERCEPT programme, aiming to motivate, mobilize and support students through green career pathways. In closing, she also highlighted that whilst knowledge and skills were crucial, values and attitudes were also of paramount importance. Young people needed to be guided to become ethical and responsible citizens, and especially good leaders for tomorrow.

**2.4 Creating More Transparency and Mutual Understanding on Recognition, Validation and Quality Assurance.** The session was joined by His Excellency Senator Dato’ Dr. Ahmad Masrizal Muhammad, Deputy Minister of Higher Education of Malaysia, His Excellency Mr. Sorin-Mihal Cmpenu, Minister of Education of Romania and Her Excellency Ms. Natalia Bocharova, Deputy Minister of Science and Higher Education of the Russia Federation.

**His Excellency Senator Dato' Dr. Ahmad Masrizal Muhammad** mentioned that quality assurance would continue to play an important role in providing benchmarks and guidance. Malaysia had undertaken several comparability projects on qualification and quality assurance systems. With other international organizations, the Malaysian creation system was endorsed in 2013 in line with the guidelines of best practices of international networks. The guidelines of best practices of international networks for quality assurance agencies in Higher Education Malaysia also completed the rings of the Malaysian qualification framework with the Asian Qualification Reference Framework in 2019. Malaysia always considered ASEM as an important platform for countries in Asia and Europe to cooperate in the field of higher education. Hence, he hoped that strong ties of all members of ASEAN would be continued. He also highlighted the inspiration to improve and move forward to achieve the issues related to transparency and mutual understanding on recognition, validation and quality.

**His Excellency Mr Sorin-Mihai Cîmpeanu** mentioned that ASEM was at important crossroads. Entering into the new decade, connectivity between Asia and Europe needed to be promoted, including balanced mobility and exchanges, promoting lifelong learning, including technical and vocational education and training. It was our conviction that the four strategic objectives and the two transversal topics were relevant to the current exchange. He also mentioned that education strategy would increase the coherence of the initiatives and measures taken within the same education process for the successful implementation of this strategy. He said concerted efforts were required from all partners and stakeholders involved. He mentioned that as we live in an increasingly interconnected world, the development of tools for recognition, validation, and quality assurance in education was particularly important to facilitate and strengthen mobility and international cooperation to enhance the quality of increasingly diverse study offers. The ASEM working group and initiatives had made important contributions to addressing the challenges concerning recognition, quality assurance and the compatibility and comparability of qualifications. The higher education compendium developed by the Expert Group on Interregional Credit Transfer Mechanism and Learning Outcome Systems was an example. The Compendium helped increase a better understand of higher education systems and further facilitates inter-regional mobility and cooperation within us, and we also had to adapt our tools, as well as develop new ones if necessary in response to the emerging digital era of learning. Regarding recognition, it was important to capitalize on the current instruments, such as recognition of the Global Convention on Qualification Recognition adopted in Paris in 2019. We needed also to take into account the reduction of the digital divide, as well as the digitalization of credentials and study documents.

**Her Excellency Ms. Natalia Bocharova** mentioned that the objectives and initiatives outlined in the ASEM Education Strategy 2030 and Action Plan reflected current priorities in the context of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals during the pandemic. COVID-19 had led to the rapid transformation of education systems worldwide. Due to global restrictions and borders closures, we witnessed a boost of technologies, development of new learning formats, digital platforms and credentials. All these tools were to ensure access to quality education. In relation to this, she mentioned the Russian information system called for modern digital educational environments. The system was developed by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. It aimed to provide a modern and secure digital framework for higher education institutions, researchers, teachers and students. The system was a one window resource, giving students access to high-quality educational content. It also provided an opportunity for Russian universities to organize virtual joint programmes, to ensure validation of online courses and digital credit transfers. The Minister also emphasized the importance of advancing inter-regional cooperation and developing digital ecosystems for education at a national level. In relation to this, special attention should be given to the issues of quality assurance, validation and recognition of qualifications. It was worth mentioning that the “ASEM Recognition Bridging Declaration” adopted in 2012 had already highlighted the importance of UNESCO’s regional documents: Lisbon and Tokyo Qualification Recognition Conventions. Russia joined the Lisbon Qualification Recognition Convention in 2000 and in 2021 Russia also joined the Tokyo Qualification Recognition Convention. It was particularly relevant to the country as a natural bridge between Europe and Asia. The country was considering the ratification of the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education, adopted at the General Conference of UNESCO in 2019. We also called on ASEM countries to join this Global Convention as soon as possible.

In conclusion, the Minister referred to the expression of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej *“It is a duty of everyone to cooperate and help each other”.* She would therefore like to continue this idea and to work together to achieve the ASEM Education Strategy 2030 and its Action Plan. As such, ASEM Member Countries would be able to overcome all challenges in education.

**3. Roundtable – Minister and Stakeholders Commitment to support the ASEM Education Strategy 2020.**

This Session was moderated by Ms. Duriya Amatavivat, Senior Advisor, Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education of Thailand. She pointed out that the Session aimed to provide a floor for Ministers to share their views and outlined their commitments on how to support Strategy 2030 which had provided a framework for ASEM partners and stakeholders to develop, implement and monitor result-oriented initiatives and projects to be agreed upon by ASEM Education Ministers. There were seven speakers in this Session as follows;

**Her Excellency Ms. Anita Muižniece, Minister of Education and Science, Latvia**

Her Excellency Ms. Anita Muižniece mentioned that the ASEM Education Process had been developed as a unique framework for facilitating and strengthening collaboration between the two regions of Europe and Asia. Latvia had been an active member of the ASEM Education Process from the beginning, also as the host of the 5th ASEM Education Ministers’ meeting and was pleased to see that the discussion on digitalization, beginning in Riga, had developed into great achievements, which were especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the challenges of COVID-19, all countries had new experiences and adapted their education systems. Therefore, it was crucial to promote the exchange of best practices in moving our regions towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

Latvia welcomed the Strategy 2030 as a new framework to facilitate inclusive and quality education and training. The country also committed to the Strategy 2030 that highlighted inclusive and balanced mobility, lifelong learning and vocational education and training, development of skills and competences, and transparency and mutual understanding on recognition, validation, and quality assurance. Latvia adopted the new Education Policy Guidelines for 2021-2027 emphasizing quality education and possibilities for all, promoting the use of potential and ability to lead the constant changes in society and the economy, considering global development trends. She was certain that this Guidelines would bring us closer, not only to her national goals, but also to the ASEM strategic objectives. She concluded her statement by emphasizing that it was important to promote the visibility of the ASEM Education Process and brought various stakeholders closer and ensured that they would contribute to the common goals. It would also help to reach different groups of society, bringing policy to the implementation and showing that every action could make a difference for the whole process.

**His Excellency Dato Hamzah Sulaiman, the Minister of Education of Brunei Darussalam**

His Excellency Dato Hamzah Sulaiman began his statement by highlighting the theme of the meeting *“ASEM Education 2030: Towards a more Resilience, Prosperous and Sustainable Future*” and said that it was relevant to the current situation of unprecedented and challenging opportunities. He looked forward to the ASEM Education Process with a great hope that it would enhance connectivity between Asia and Europe and create result-oriented initiatives and projects. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, Brunei Darussalam remained committed to ensuring that these challenges were addressed and projects could be created to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, particularly SDG4. The country also supported the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework and its implementation plan, which was in line with the national vision of Brunei 2035, emphasizing the promotion of educated and highly skilled and accomplished people. Lifelong learning had the potential to actively respond to uncertain challenges and it was a crucial mechanism for providing all learners with education, training, upskilling and reskilling opportunities that enhanced the employability of current and future generations in this ever-changing labor markets. Brunei Darussalam established the lifelong learning centre focusing on the four pillars of programmes which were workforce development, academic upgrading, community development, and personnel development. He concluded his statement by emphasizing that ASEM should work together towards a more resilient, prosperous and sustainable future and value the importance of ASEM Education Strategy 2030 for the next decade in building inter-regional commitment of ASEM Education partners and stakeholders.

**Ms. Melissa Khoo, the Deputy Secretary of Higher Education and Skills of the Ministry of Education of Singapore**

Ms. Melissa Khoo started her statement by mentioning that the virtual ASEMME8 demonstrated commitment to advance the educational ties between Asia and Europe. Singapore believed that it was important to promote the value of connectivity and mobility. While travel restrictions of the past two years had impacted educational mobility, institutions, students, and educators had adapted through new modalities, such as virtual international exchanges. Singapore supported the objective of ASEM Strategy 2030 on enhancing educational connectivity between Asia and Europe, both through new virtual arrangements, and also physical exchanges.

Singapore also recognized the increasing role of lifelong learning and the need to develop skills and competencies so as to prepare for future work. Aging populations, coupled with disruptions due to Industry 4.0 transformation, had made lifelong learning a priority. Lifelong learners would need to pick up a wide variety of skills and competencies to tackle new and emerging challenges, from greater digitalization of work and industry, to global challenges such as climate change. Singapore had initiated the SkillsFuture Movement to help every individual develop relevant skills for the future, in every job. Every Singaporean above the age of 25 would have SkillsFuture credits that could be used to pay for training courses from approved providers, with higher subsidies for those above 40 years old. The movement involved collaboration among multiple stakeholders, including individuals, employers, industry associations, unions, training providers, and government agencies. She also mentioned that ASEM Education Strategy 2030 could be a good reference for ASEM members, as we look to each other for new ideas and best practices. She reaffirmed Singapore’s support to the Strategy 2030, and looked forward to advancing educational ties between both the two regions, for a better future.

**His Excellency Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nguyen Van Phuc, the Deputy Minister of Education of Vietnam**

His Excellency Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nguyen Van Phuc mentioned that over the past two years, countries were affected by COVID-19. The pandemic had comprehensive effect on countries in the ASEM. Vietnam had an online ceremony for the new school year in September 2021. The problems required the country to implement solutions to the transformation of education. He mentioned that the ASEM Education strategy must be based on valuable lessons shared by member countries to ensure a high quality, flexible, and adaptive education system that could meet the needs of the implementation of ASEM 2030. He also emphasized the necessity to promote high quality resources in the education sector as the top priority in the Vietnam Development Education Strategy. Vietnam also aimed to build an education system that could fully equip students with necessary knowledge and skills to allow transformation, capacity building, and promotion and building of a lifelong learning society. He mentioned that it was necessary for Vietnam to build an urban educational system that included common data sharing resources, educational resources, learning resources and especially digitizing tools for the management of vision and educational development in the country. He believed that the ASEM Education Ministers Meeting would be an important high level policy forum and provide a good opportunity for member countries to share practical lessons. He emphasized that with solidarity, there would be a better future of education and sustainable development. Member countries should join hands to cooperate and had common understanding of the ASEM 2030 goal. The Minister of Education and Training of Vietnam committed to widely support the implementation of the ASEM Education Strategy and Action Plan 2030.

**Ms. Themis Christophidou, the Director General of DG Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, of the European Commission**

Ms. Themis Christophidou mentioned that for several years, the European Union had funded a number of opportunities, fostering people to people cooperation between Asia and Europe. Through the international dimension of the Erasmus+ program, the European Union has supported academic exchanges and cooperation projects between European and Asian institutions to develop new teaching, training and frameworks for institutional reform. She also acknowledged that the action plan would encourage greater participation in these initiatives, along with the wide sharing of results. The strategy also attached great importance to sharing policy initiatives and good practice among countries. She mentioned that the European education area would focus on reaching all learners in an inclusive way, including boosting support for teachers, enhancing the special role play by Europe's universities and preparing Europe's education sector and learners for green and digital transitions. She hoped that these activities would enhance Europe’s global attractiveness as a study destination as well as preferred partners for cooperation. She also mentioned the need to seek synergies with multilateral organizations and other multilateral processes.

**Ambassador Toru Morikawa, the ASEF Executive Director**

Ambassador Toru Morikawa mentioned that since the inception of the ASEM Education Process in 2008, ASEF witnessed its evolution and played an active role. It contributed with its project outcomes in the field of higher education, secondary education and youth to the deliberations of the ASEM education policy makers and officials and shaped the agenda of past ASEM Education Ministers Meetings. ASEF had been a key pillar and a motor for the Asia-Europe education collaboration. The Ambassador highlighted the working relationship with previous ASEM Education Secretariats. He recalled that the Secretariat was first established by Germany, then handed over to Indonesia and currently Belgium was the host of the ASEM Education Secretariat. Furthermore, he also added that the ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning (ASEM LLL Hub) had been hosted by the University College Cork with the support of the Irish Government. Further to this, he mentioned that ASEF supports the ASEM Education Strategy 2030 by continuing to contribute to exchange, collaboration and innovation in the formal and non-formal education sector towards the four strategic priorities of the ASEM Education Process and the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN Agenda 2030.

He said that ASEF would remain focus on creating awareness and supporting inclusive and equitable access across all education sectors and engage civil society and government stakeholders in interdisciplinary, technology-driven and lifelong learning opportunities to enhance quality education. The Foundation will spend further efforts in bringing the voices of civil society into the ASEM Process and in strengthening platforms for structured dialogues between representatives of the education community, young people and ASEM Education Ministers and ASEM Leaders. He also thanked the team of the ASEM Education Secretariat hosted by Belgium for an excellent and inspiring collaboration over past years. ASEF hoped that one of the 53 ASEM Partners would value this opportunity and took over the host of the Secretariat for the coming years.

**Prof. Dr. Michael Murphy, President of the European University Association (EUA)**

Professor Dr. Michael Murphy reaffirmed his commitment, on behalf of the International Association of Universities, the ASEAN University Network and the European University Association - to the broadening, deepening and implementation of the Process as set out in their circulated joint statement. He emphasized that ASEM should maximize the capacity of humanity to cope with challenges and demanded ever closer cooperation and solidarity – strengthening of bilateral and multilateral partnerships. The pandemic had also stimulated the rethinking of internationalization mobility models -  to be more sustainable, environmental-friendly and more egalitarian, building on the opportunities of digitalization. The pandemic had increased the awareness of the immense value of open science, global collaboration, and the indispensable value of education in ensuring societal resilience.  He reintegrated that it was crucial to reimagine collaborative education and research to ensure that this concept remained at the heart of the Asia-Europe agenda for the coming decade. Universities were the engines for research and innovation and for education. They could bring diverse strengths and experiences and real-life knowledge of what worked in building international partnerships. He emphasized that the targets of the 2030 Agenda and our joint commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals provided a new momentum to this process.

**4. Formal Adoption of the Strategy and Action Plan 2030 and ASEMME8 Chair’s Conclusions**

The Chair requested Ms. Duriya Amatavivat, in her capacity of the Chair of ASEM SOM 2 to introduce the working papers on the ASEM Education Strategy 2030 and its accompanying education action plan as well as the ASEMME8 Chair’s Conclusions as follows:

**ASEM Education Strategy 2030**

Ms. Duriya Amatavivat informed the Meeting that the final draft of the ASEM Education Strategy had gone through a long process of consultation among member countries and ASEM Stakeholders during the past few years. She expressed her gratitude to all the feedbacks and inputs from all Member Countries and partners during the ASEM Senior Officials meeting, which was held on December 13 and 14, 2021 to finalize the draft document. She then informed the Meeting of the four strategic objectives identified in the Strategy as follows 1) Enhancing Connectivity between Asia and Europe by Boosting Inclusive and Balanced Mobility and Exchanges. This included all forms of mobility and exchanges as well as all forms of education settings 2) Promoting Lifelong Learning including Technical and Vocational Educational Training. This strategy aimed to link education and training to the world of work to ensure employability 3) Fostering the Development of Skills and Competences. Essential skills and competences to respond to future work was highlighted 4) Creating More Transparency and Mutual Understanding on Recognition, Validation and Quality Assurance. It aimed to build trust and transparency on quality assurance systems, recognition of qualifications. In order to achieve the objectives, six instruments and working methods were identified in the ASEM Education Strategy including People-to-people Connectivity, Policy Dialogue, Exchange of knowledge, expertise and good practices, Collaborative Research on Education, Synergies with Multilateral Organizations and Processes and Visibility and Communication.

The Chair then asked the Meeting to adopt the Document.

The ASEM Education Strategy 2030 was adopted.

**Education Action Plan 2030**

Ms. Duriya Amatavivat informed the Meeting that this document also had had a process of consultations similar to the ASEM Education Strategy. She also commended the valuable feedbacks and inputs from all member countries and partners. It contained six parts, starting with an overview of the four strategic objectives. The highlight part would be on the table of 17 actions, projects and initiatives, of which 16 are new initiatives, and how they responded to the four strategic objectives. Next, the fifth part indicated the process of planning and monitoring. The last part would contribute to the Ecosystem of multilateralism.

The Chair then asked the Meeting to adopt the Document. The Education Action Plan 2030 was adopted

**Chair’s Conclusions**

Ms. Duriya Amatavivat informed the Meeting about the first part of the Chair’s conclusion starting by welcoming the theme of the meeting ***“ASEM Education 2030: Towards more resilient, prosperous and sustainable futures”***. The main aspiration of the meeting was to further share and discuss existing and new initiatives and projects, as well as to endorse the ASEM Education Strategy and Action Plan 2030. She then presented an overview of the projects and initiatives as identified according to their priorities.

**Priority A: Quality Assurance and Recognition** aimed to build mutual trust among higher education systems to promote attractiveness, transparency, comparability and the permeability of each system. Some of the examples of activities, projects and initiatives were the tasks of the Working Group for Implementing the ASEM Recognition Bridging Declaration, the work of the Expert Group on Interregional Credit Transfer Mechanisms, Learning Outcome Systems, and Higher Education in the ASEAN Region through the EU-SHARE project.

**Priority B: Engaging Business and Industry in Education**  aimed to identify and to remove the obstacles of learners, teachers, and staff mobility for work placements between Asia and Europe and to advocate experiences that combine professional competence development with intercultural learning. According to this Priority, The Minister would welcome new initiative of the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), the ‘ASEF Higher Education Innovation Laboratories’ with a focus on the ‘Universities’ Role in Artificial Intelligence (AI) Innovation Ecosystems’. Launched in 2021

**Priority C: Balanced Mobility** aimed to provide more opportunities and new approaches to increase equal chances to mobility and stimulate inclusion in mobility. In this regard the significant roles of the ASEM -DUO Fellowship Programme were highlighted and the initiative of the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) to set up a pilot project on the creation of local student organisations supporting international students in Asia was indicated in the document. The document also emphasized the continued significant achievements of the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) in enhancing people-to-people connectivity and balanced mobility between Asia and Europe for youth, students, researchers, academics and higher education institutions staff as well as teachers through various non-formal and formal educational and youth projects.

**Priority D: Lifelong Learning (LLL) including Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)** is in line with the SDG4oftheUnited Nations 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development

The Conclusions mentioned the commitment of the University College Cork, Ireland, to host the Hub and to revitalise the Research Networks with the support of the Government of Ireland for a five-year period 2020-2025. In this priority area, Ministers also acknowledged the efforts of the European Centre for Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), the European Training Foundation (ETF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), and the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) in developing an updated global inventory on regional and national qualification frameworks.

The Chair’s Conclusions also included the announcement of new projects, initiatives and activities. For examples, the initiative of the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) to develop an umbrella organisation to support international student organisations in Asia. The Project on Strengthening Leadership with Gender Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity in Higher Education Institutions in the Greater Mekong Subregion and Timor-Leste, which was supported by SEAMEO RIHED and the British Council and would be implemented from March 2022 to March 2023. The initiative of SEAMEO RIHED and EU-SHARE to launch the SEA-EU Mobility Programme on Sustainable Development. The Meeting also took note of the first ASEM Workshop on “Youth Learners’ Mobility in an Agile World: an SDG 14 “Life Below Water” Learning Programme and Case Study was also indicated in the document. The Ministers acknowledged the contributions of Thailand to promote innovative solutions for virtual youth learners’ mobility in ASEM for the post COVID-19 recovery and welcomed the further development of virtual exchange programmes in SDG Education and the efforts of SEAMEO RIHED and EU-SHARE.

Ministers invited Senior Officials to

1. To use the ASEM Education Strategy 2030 and its accompanying Action Plan as a framework for the further development of the above-mentioned projects and initiatives, as well as for monitoring their contribution to the realisation of the ASEM Education Process, its vision, and the four Strategic Objectives identified for the next decade.
2. To take note of and use the recommendations as provided in the [working paper](https://asem-education.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/ASEM-EG-Digitalisation_Working-Paper_2021.pdf) of the Expert Group Digitalisation, which aims at making education more flexible to respond to the current and future demands and focuses on ensuring that digitally enhanced education is inclusive and open to all learners.
3. To use the recommendations as provided in the ‘ARC8 Outlook Report 2030: Inclusive and Diverse Higher Education in Asia and Europe’ and the ‘ASEM National Equity Policy Study’ of the 8th ASEF Regional Conference on Higher Education (ARC8), the Official Dialogue Partner of the ASEMME.
4. To support the ratification of existing conventions on recognition, such as the Global Convention on Recognition, the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the Tokyo Convention, as they provide mechanisms for facilitating recognition, and as a consequence, encourage mobility and the building of more connected higher education systems.
5. To take note of the importance of recognizing the qualifications of refugees and displaced persons – as enshrined in both the Tokyo Recognition Convention and Global Recognition Convention, as well as the UNESCO Qualifications Passport for Refugees and Vulnerable Migrants.
6. To continue the work of the Standing Working Group with updated Terms of Reference to support the ASEM Education Secretariat in the strategic work of the ASEM Education Process (monitoring of the implementation of the ASEM Education 2030 Strategy and Action Plan).
7. To foster synergies with multilateral organisations and other multilateral processes to serve common goals and pool resources and capacities, where possible, to avoid the duplication of efforts, as well as to establish new and more systematic collaborations. The Ministers invited partners and stakeholders to identify areas of common interest.
8. To actively provide regular input and updates on ASEM Education projects, initiatives and activities for communication and visibility purposes: ASEM Education and ASEM Infoboard websites, newsletters and social media channels.

**Ministers mandated the ASEM Education Secretariat:**

1. To coordinate and monitor the ASEM Education Process and its initiatives, as well as to analyse their progress and results within the framework of the ASEM Education 2030 Strategy and Action Plan.
2. To prepare a Stocktaking Report analysing the progress and results of initiatives and projects, and underline how they contribute to the ASEM Education Strategy 2030 and, when relevant, to the SDGs.
3. To present the achievements of the ASEM Education Process and the results of ASEMME during ASEM Summits. This includes the key results of the ASEM Education Process.

**The Ministers invited:**

1. All ASEM partner countries, in particular all Asian partner countries in line with the customary rotation principle, to express their interest to host the ASEM Education Secretariat for the period 2022 to 2026 after the end of the Belgian mandate.
2. The European ASEM partner countries to express their interest to host the Intermediate Senior Officials’ Meeting (ISOM), which is due to take place from November-December 2022.
3. The Asian ASEM partner countries to express their interest to host the 1st Senior Officials’ Meeting (SOM1) of ASEMME9, which is due to take place in May 2023.
4. The European ASEM partner countries to express their interest to host the 2nd Senior Officials’ Meeting (SOM2) and the 9th ASEM Education Ministers’ Meeting (ASEMME9), that are due to take place in November-December 2023.

The Chair informed the Meeting that the development of the ASEM Education Strategy 2030 and its accompanying education action plan were important milestones to encourage a renewed commitment towards a stronger dialogue and collaboration platform between Asia and Europe. In order to reaffirm our commitments to the Strategy and its Action Plan, she requested the floor to formally adopt the document which had been circulated to all ASEM member countries in advance to review and amend before formally being adopted by today’s meeting.

The Meeting adopted the Chair’s Conclusions.

**5. Introduction of / Call for New Hosts: ISOM, SOMs, ASEMME9**

The chair informed the Meeting that no countries had volunteered to host the ASEM Meetings, which included ISOM (to be held by the Europe side from November-December 2022) SOM1 (to be held by the Asia side in May 2023) SOM2 and ASEMME9 (to be held by the Europe side from November-December 2023). She therefore requested cooperation from ASEAN Member Countries to contact AES directly if they would like to express their intentions to host any of the meetings.

**6**. **New AES host or next steps after the end of the Belgian AES mandate**

The Chair expressed her appreciation to the Government of Belgium for its valuable support of hosting the Asia –Europe Secretariat over the past four years, as well as contributing to the development of ASEM Education activities during the past four years. The Meeting then opened video messages from Ms. Valerie Glatigny, Minister for Higher Education, Adult Higher Education, Scientific Research, University Hospitals, Youth Aid, Houses of Justice, Youth, Sports and Brussels Promotion of the French Community, of Belgium, and the Flemish Ministry of Education.

**Ms. Valerie Glatigny.** She conveyed her great pleasure that during the period and despite the difficult health crisis, the Asia Europe dialogue had succeeded in maintaining itself and its structure. She mentioned that in 2017, Belgium made the decision to host the ASEM Education Secretariat. Since 2019, Belgium had embarked on the creation of the ASEM Education Strategy and its Action Plan in order to develop a framework for collaboration between partners over the long term. She was pleased to see the outcomes of some ambitious projects. Indeed, over this period, the ASEM Secretariat was able to achieve the objectives. She mentioned three important activities to be carried out. Firstly, facilitating international exchanges, the sharing of good practices and strong collaboration between peers by supporting the various project that you have carried out. Secondly, ensuring a lively communication channel and giving increased visibility to initiatives during a turbulent period. Thirdly, highlighting the links between ASEM initiatives and the United Nations Sustainable development goals. She then thanked all the partners that had helped the Secretariat and announced that the Belgian mandate was coming to end by the end of 2021. She then welcomed the coming Secretariat to ensure a smooth transition on the work of ASEM.

**The Message from Flemish Ministry of Education**.

The French and Flemish Community of Belgium had hosted the ASEM Education Secretariat since 2017 and its mandate was coming to an end at the end of December 2021.  Even in these challenging times, marked by the global COVID-19 pandemic, dialogue and cooperation between Asian and European educational partners and stakeholders had continued. This included many activities, projects and initiatives that had continued over the past years, as highlighted in the Stocktaking Report and the Chair’s Conclusions. One of the new highlights, developed during the Belgian secretariat mandate, was the ASEM Education Strategy 2030 and the accompanying Action Plan that had been adopted. This vision for the next decade was the result of a rich collaboration among ASEM Education partners and stakeholders.

In order to ensure continuity and build forward on the precious work done so far, and to further guide the implementation of this strategy and action plan, it was imperative that the ASEM Education Secretariat would be taken over by another partner country after the end of the Belgian mandate. The Ministers of Education of the French and Flemish Community of Belgium therefore called on ASEM Education Partners to indicate their interest to take up this opportunity.

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| **Ms. Emilie Degueldre, Coordinator AES, Ministry of the Federation Wallonia-Brussels**  |

She started her remarks by thanking all partners and stakeholders for the pleasant and fruitful collaboration in the framework of the ASEM Education Process. She mentioned that the ASEM Education Secretariat had been hosted so far by Germany, Indonesia and Belgium were ones of the cornerstones of the ASEM Education Process. The core mandate of the ASEM Education Secretariat was to facilitate and coordinate the different ASEM Education activities, projects and initiatives and ensures effective communication about these projects and initiatives, as well as communication between partners and stakeholders on a multilateral basis. The ASEM Education Secretariat also facilitated overall processes such as monitoring reports, preparation documents for the political meetings, and discussion papers in close collaboration with meeting hosts and partners.

She recalled that the ASEM Education Secretariat should be hosted next by an Asian country from January 2022 to December 2026. However, currently there was no Asian ASEM member countries had expressed their willingness to take up this role. Therefore, she would like to reiterate the call for a new host and was now open to both Asian and European countries. In view of the commitment of partners and stakeholders in on-going and future projects and initiatives, as well as the recent endorsement of the ASEM Education Strategy 2030, it was essential to ensure a smooth transition even if it implied to make an exception to the rotation principle. To guarantee the continuity of the basic missions of the Secretariat until a new host was identified, some core tasks would be temporarily distributed among the Standing Working Group members, whose mandate was to support the ASEM Education Secretariat in its strategic work. In collaboration with the current Belgian Secretariat, all necessary measures had been taken to ensure a smooth transition once a partner country steps forwards. She also invited interested countries to contact the current Belgian ASEM Education Secretariat (secretariat@asem-education.org) for more information.

7. **Closing Remarks**

In her closing remarks, the Chair conveyed her appreciation to the Ministers who expressed their commitments to formulate the ASEM Education Strategy for 2030 and stepped up their actions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

She also thanked the ASEM Education Secretariat and the other regional and international organizations and stakeholders for their support of the Meeting. She then expressed her gratitude to all Ministers and their colleagues for their valuable contribution to the Meeting, by providing inputs, feedbacks, ideas and deliberations. Finally, she called for the unity of ASEM’s efforts to build an inclusive society and move Asia and Europe towards the achievement of sustainable development.

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