

# **Chair's Minutes**

## **of the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) in Hanoi, 19/20 January 2009 in Preparation of the ASEM Conference of Ministers Responsible for Education in Hanoi, 14/15 May 2009**

At invitation of the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam, the Senior Officials of ASEM countries met in Hanoi on 19/20 January, 2009, in order to prepare for the second ASEM Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education in Hanoi on 14/15 May, 2009. At the meeting in Hanoi some 62 representatives from 32 ASEM countries and the European Commission were present.

In his welcome address, Dr. Banh Tien Long, the Standing Vice Minister of the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam, stressed the importance of educational cooperation between Asia and Europe as free trade agreements are under negotiation between the regions and among the regions' member countries. Education should lead the way and help remove bottlenecks for cultural, education and economic cooperation among countries in ASEM. He also expressed his expectation for more concrete actions to start dialogues on quality assurance, recognition and on human resource development in order to improve the employability by strengthening education business relations to increase mobility among ASEM countries.

The Vietnamese SOM chair, Mr. Tran Ba Viet Dung, the General Director of the International Cooperation Department from the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam welcomed the ASEM delegations and stressed that that the Hanoi conference in may 2009 should build on the results of discussion and recommendations from the first ASEM Conference in Berlin and prepare for the ASEM summit in Brussels in 2010 and give valuable input to the third ministerial conference on education in 2010.

### **1. Organizational aspects of the Hanoi conference**

On behalf of the SOM chair, Mr. Nguyen Ngoc Hung, Deputy General Director of ICD, MOET Vietnam, presented the draft conference program (see attachment) and explained that

- Delegations should be comprised of not more than 3 representatives (including the head of delegation)
- Delegations are kindly asked to nominate their delegates before April 15, 2009 at the latest.
- The ministerial meeting will take place in the Sheraton Hotel in Hanoi

- According to the ASEM format, accommodation and travel costs have to be covered by the delegations
- MOET shall work with embassies to provide VIP services to their delegations in Hanoi
- During the ministerial meeting only the head of delegation will have the right to speak
- After the Opening speech of the Vietnamese chair, the head of the delegate of the next organizing country, two sponsors who have developed concrete proposals, plans, funding initiatives for the conference topics are invited to make 6--8 minute speeches
- Other heads of delegates are welcomed to make 5-6 minute speeches
- The language of the meeting will be English and Vietnamese (English-Vietnamese interpretation will be provided)
- There are opportunities for bilateral meetings between heads of delegations during the conference. Delegations are asked to announce their wishes for such bilateral talks well before the conference to the conference organizers.
- Senior officials will have the opportunity to meet with the Vietnamese Chair on Wednesday, 13 May (09.30 a.m) to discuss the draft Chair's conclusions.
- Delegations already present on Wednesday, 13 May are invited to participate in ASEM –DUO Experts' Meeting in the afternoon at Sheraton Hotel.
- In the evening of 14 May, the conference dinner for the delegations will be hosted by the Deputy Prime Minister – Minister of Education and Training of Vietnam. Ambassadors of the ASEM countries will be invited to participate by the Vietnamese Chair in early April.
- At the Press Conference on 15 May only the Vietnamese Chair, the head of the next organizing country and the sponsors of the conference will speak.
- In the morning of Saturday 16 May (7.00 h) delegates are welcomed to have one day visit to Ha Long Bay (a well-known World Cultural Heritage recognized by UNESCO), calling at Hai Phong Maritime University (one of Vietnam's university model for a strong link with industry and the world of work). Delegations are asked to communicate their participation to the conference organizers before the conference.

## **2. Topics of the Hanoi conference**

At the first ministerial conference in Berlin, Vietnam sent survey questionnaires to all delegations asking for the selection of topics for the second ministerial conference in Hanoi. The following two topics received most attention from delegations and have been chosen as two main topics (including a number of sub-topics) for this year conference in Hanoi:

- a. Quality assurance, Credit Recognition and Transfer in ASEM;**
- b. Sustainable Human Resource Development for ASEM Future Needs**

The SOM chair thanked the delegations for their feedback to the survey and invited the delegations to send their country reports to the organizer early April, 2009. The reports, together with an executive summary of SOM, will be presented by the Vietnamese Chair to the Ministers in Hanoi.

Mrs. Susanne Burger, from the German Federal Ministry of Education and the Research, then summarized the main activities and work done during the term of the first ministerial conference as well as the recommendations to the second conference in Hanoi and asked the delegations for comments.

The meeting was followed by a breakout session with two groups focusing their discussions on the above two topics. The presentations and discussion showed that in general all delegations agreed on the two main topics proposed by the Vietnamese chair. However, with regard to the various sub-topics of the two main topics there was consensus to concentrate on a few points only.

It was agreed to discuss the following sub-topics in the plenary sessions of the Hanoi conference:

- (1) Plenary session I on “Quality assurance, Credit Recognition and Transfer in ASEM”
  - (a) Starting Asia – Europe dialogue on the Bologna Process and a Parallel Process for Asian countries by implementing three pilot groups of experts on the following topics: Credits and Learning Outcomes, Quality Assurance and Qualification Frameworks.
  - (b) Increasing the number Joint study programs between Asian and European higher education institutions by using bilateral and multilateral funding schemes.
  - (c) Sharing information, experience and best practice in standards and guidelines.
  
- (2) Plenary session II on “Sustainable Human Resource Development for ASEM Future Needs”
  - (a) Employability regarding industrial needs and international skill demands
  - (b) Sharing information and data on skills forecast by set up links among national skills forecasting centers to improve information on new skills for new jobs.

(c) Promoting vocational education and training by improving the attractiveness of VET through training of trainers and curriculum innovation.

In addition, the Chair suggested the implementation of an ASEM Secretariat in order to make the ASEM education process more stable and efficient and to facilitate the dialogue, projects and further activities including the preparation of Ministerial conferences. The mandate should include the period of four to five years at most. Member States are invited to express their interest in hosting an initial small Secretariat and in sending staff.

The delegations' comments on these sub-topics are summarized below:

Sub-topics 1a, 1b and 1c:

- Sub-topics 2a, 2b and 2c:

### **3. Possible key messages of the ASEM Education Ministers**

After studying the recommendations of the first ministerial conference and the discussion of the two topics, the SOM chair invited the delegations to discuss possible key messages to the ministerial conference in Hanoi. It was suggested that Ministers could:

- Acknowledge the results of the ASEM Rector's Conference in Berlin and of the Frankfurt working group on removing obstacles for mobility.
- Initiate a structured dialogue and a regular exchange of experiences and practice on issues related to the two main topics of the conference.
- Form a voluntary group of countries in Asia to begin the dialogue on the Bologna Process to identify existing challenges and possible solutions for further mobility between Asia and Europe.
- Suggest to enhance the visibility and attractiveness of higher education systems and institutions of both regions by providing more and better information and offering high-quality education.
- Acknowledge the importance of higher education and vocational training for the development of competitive knowledge-based societies and underline the pivotal role of education-industry cooperation and lifelong learning for employability.
- Invite higher education institutions and industry to set up dialogue platforms, to establish partnerships and to intensify cooperation (e.g. developing of curricula, joint research projects, recognition of prior learning).
- Set up a network of national Skill Forecast Centers among ASEM member countries

## **Road Map for preparing the Hanoi Conference**

At the end of the Senior Officials Meeting the SOM chair summarized important dates and tasks relevant for the preparation of the ministerial conference in Hanoi:

(1) 15 February 2009: Send out Invitation and Tentative Program for the Ministerial conference in Hanoi

(2) 20 March 2009: Sending out of SOM minutes to the ASEM delegations by SOM chair

(3) 10 April, 2009: Send out reminder of Invitation and Tentative Program for the ministerial conference in Hanoi and invitation letters to ASEM ambassadors for the conference dinner on 14 May 2009 by the Vietnamese Chair.

(4) 20 April 2009: ASEM delegations are asked to send in their country's reports on the basis of the issues raised in the SOM minutes. The reports should include examples of good practice or suggested actions related to the conference topics.

(5) 25 April 2009: Sending out of draft chair conclusions to the ASEM delegations by the Vietnamese Chair.

(6) 13 May 2009: SOM meeting at 9.00h in the Sheraton Hotel Hanoi for Discussion of the draft Chair's Conclusions

(7) 14 May 2009: Opening of the Life-long Learning Exhibition prior to the Ministerial Conference.

The SOM chair thanked all delegates for their valuable contributions and the fruitful discussions during the meeting helping to prepare an interesting and forward-looking Ministerial conference in Hanoi.

Hanoi, 20 January 2009