



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
EXTERNAL RELATIONS DIRECTORATE GENERAL
DIRECTORATE Asia (except Japan and Korea)
Horizontal matters

Brussels, 17th September 2003
CK D(2003)

Asia-Europe Consultative Seminar with Civil Society
17th and 18th November 2003, Brussels

The European Commission (DG RELEX H1) is organising this Consultative Seminar in Brussels with the aim in the context of Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is to bring together **non-state actors from both Asia and Europe** to exchange views on how the civil society dialogue of both regions can be enhanced and how ASEM can promote this dialogue. How to improve the transparency and public awareness of ASEM will be discussed. For this purpose, representatives of civil society from ASEM partners in both Asia and the EU are invited.

The role of civil society is gaining in importance in Asia as well as Europe. It is desirable to encourage an inclusive and transparent governance style also into the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) process. Thus it is proposed to involve civil society in its widest definition. Thus including non-government organisations as well as other social partners such as trades unions, employers, and other non-state organisations allowing overlapping of interests and content among these groupings. ASEM is an inter-regional dialogue that ranges from exchanges at summit meetings to contacts people-to-people in many different sectors of activity and thus should demonstrate its openness to all groupings.

ASEM can allow the widest possible openness of participation, by leaving issues of representativity where possible to be agreed upon amongst civil society itself. In May 2002, a first "Consultative Forum on ASEM 4" was held in Brussels where participation were balanced across a wide spectrum of civil society i.e. NGOs , trade unions and business representatives. The **Asia-Europe Consultative Seminar with Civil Society 17-18 November 2003** follows-up on this Consultative Forum on ASEM IV in May last year and the Civil Society Consultative Forum in the margins of the ASEM IV Summit in Copenhagen last September 2002.

Asian and European partners increasingly appreciate the role of civil society's involvement in opinion-shaping. Their ability to enable wider public acceptance and ownership of public policy positions can strengthen the legitimacy of the ASEM process. As a follow-up to this seminar it is proposed to encourage civil society activities in connection with ASEM, in particular in the margin of future summit and ministerial meetings as and when deemed appropriate by the hosts.