

I noticed that during recent years, the engagement of civil society has been highlighted by states, international bodies and business world. For example, UN has established a civil society panel in policy-making process, which consists of 12 eminent individuals. The Panel's main task is to produce a set of practical recommendations for the Secretary General.

Today, we come here to discuss the relation between civil society and ASEM. I think it's a progress. It is of great significant for the reform and improvement of ASEM. But during almost two days discussion, I found that we were mostly talking in the direction of ASEM to civil society, instead of the opposite direction. Actually, the relation between ASEM and civil society is some kind of interaction. I am wondering when we emphasis the chance that ASEM gave to the civil society, why can't we take into consideration of the chance that the civil society present to the ASEM. Ultimately, the resolution of ASEM would benefit the civil society, why couldn't we think about choices the civil society could present to the ASEM concerning the issues that affecting their lives. The civil society should have a voice and influence at the policy-making tables. NGOs and other civil society can work together with the government and business world to foster action and partnerships in the pursuit of good governance. This kind of interaction would greatly improve the transparency and democracy in ASEM policy-making.

Actually, in the interaction process, the media plays a very important role. There is no doubt that media is a key constituent in any democratic and transparency process. As an instrument to create greater awareness, it can contribute to the strengthening of new civil societies that are gradually taking part in interaction with ASEM. The media achieves this goal through the access of information. Information plays a key part in reform and development by explaining to the civil society not only what is happening but also the new choices involved. Access to information implies that the people can make informed choices and also take their own choices. Subsequently, it follows that the media can help to empower the people. Let's take the example of SARS, undoubtedly, Chinese government played a decisive role in coping with the crisis, but without the participation of media, Chinese people could not get out the wide spreading panic so quickly, and Chinese government could not mobilize the people to fight against SARS. Another example, the British government and the Iraq war, it is believed that should the media get the truth before hand, the British government would not have got involved in the Iraq war. That would be another story.

Of course, on the other hand, as concerning the media itself, media should behave itself in the interaction process. I always believe that every article should be based on the truth, better based on the firsthand information. The popularity of the articles is based on truth, instead of exaggeration, distortion or falsification. The goal of the media is to promote the understanding between ASEM and civil society, not misunderstanding. The responsibility of media is to choose the most important and the worthiest truth in the information-overwhelming world.

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