

PEACEFUL COOPERATION

INTEGRATION OF THE INTERESTS OF EAST AND WEST

In the twenty-first century, most countries in the world have agreed that it is not possible to solve any major problems independently—that is, without multi-polar and inclusive regional and international systems of cooperation. Global development has been accelerating, and as additional diverse cultures and civilizations advance on the path of development and step onto the world stage as actors, new powers and new alliances have

formed. (Consider the rapid emergence over the last three decades of Brazil, India, and China, three completely different societies, as global economic forces.) Thus, countries must think farther ahead and are under increasing pressure to look beyond merely national solutions and seek multilateral political and economic relations. This leads to increased cooperation and mutually beneficial relations between neighboring countries. The

same can be said of continents—take the example of North and South America, for instance—whose constituent states are seeking to unite their common interests.

In recent years, developing Asia-Europe partnership has attracted world-wide attention. Geographically, the two continents are adjacent, so there is ample opportunity for mutually beneficial economic relations. Also, both continents' regional interests intersect in multiple



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areas, such as transport and communications, energy, environment, and security. Maybe it's easy for Asia, bordering Europe and forming Eurasian region with it, to get the attention of the West. Asia as a whole, including the Middle East, is the most densely populated and ethnically diverse continent, and includes the birthplaces of most of the world's mainstream religions. Asia as a continent retains its multiple and varied cultures, and it has extensive oil resources, but it's also facing terrorism and other complications, including resource issues and uneven development both within and between nations.

Given both rapid growth and these pressing problems, not only neighboring nations but all countries on both continents are focusing on complicated regional security questions and are eager to solve pressing problems quickly and rationally through political and diplomatic negotiations. ASEM is one of the main platforms where interests of East and West meet and blend and where common political understandings can be worked out. Moreover, in the last twenty years, countries of the Eurasian region have been continually seeking new ways to integrate their interests through negotiations via international conferences and workshops.

On August 28, 2014, there was an international conference held on the topic of "Prospects of European Union-Central Asia Relations" in Almaty,



Prof. Dr. Gerhard Sabathil

IMAGE: DROP OF LIGHT/SHUTTERSTOCK/ASEM SUMMIT



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Kazakhstan. In his keynote speech at the conference, Prof. Dr. Gerhard Sabathil, Director in the European External Service, Brussels, said, in part:

"The peoples of Europe and Central Asia have millenary ties as they had travelled and settled along the paths connecting East and West in the vast Euro-Asian space. Beyond wars and conquests, these ties contributed to the mutual enrichment of our knowledge and culture. In 2007, the European Union

adopted a Strategy for a new partnership with Central Asia. This Strategy builds on the progress in bilateral cooperation and reflects the growing interdependence between Central Asia and the EU. It focuses on strengthening cooperation with the Central Asian region as a whole, notably in the areas of economic development, energy, transport, water resources, environment as well as youth and education. The Strategy also identifies common interests in the areas of security, stability, rule of law, human rights and governance. This strategy reflects that the region is, despite overall positive economic growth rates, characterized by unequal development and significant diversity in terms of political, economic and social systems."

The same could be said of all the member countries of ASEM. The President of Mongolia, Ts. Elbegdorj, who has led the organization of the 11th ASEM Summit in Ulaanbaatar, considers that if our two continents reach a common understanding on political, economic and population issues, we will make great contributions to the global stability, socio-economic advancement and peace.

