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## Closing speech of Yves Leterme, ASEM Summit Beijing

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Closing speech of Yves Leterme  
Belgian Prime Minister  
ASEM Summit  
Beijing, October 24-25, 2008

As this Summit is coming to a close, we can all agree that the ASEM process is steadily progressing and is demonstrating its usefulness. A usefulness to improving the daily life of more than 50 percent of the world's population. We owe the success of this Summit to the vivid interaction of all the participants. We should be very grateful for this strong boost, both in terms of participation and in terms of substantive participation.

I think I can be the spokesperson for all the participants, saying particularly that we are much obliged to our Chinese Hosts who have succeeded so well in accompanying the process of this Summit. Special thanks go to Prime Minister Wen Jiabao for his brilliant and efficient conduct of our proceedings. Thanks to these efforts ASEM is definitely a great work in progress.

The agenda of this Summit was crossed by the worldwide financial and economic crisis. I am glad that we picked up the item because the discussions we had in this delicate period of turmoil in the world economy contributed to a necessary understanding.

An array of concrete proposals bodes well for a successful summit in Washington and I am convinced that these proposals deserve to be taken on board.

Our discussions and debates exposed the interrelationship of so many aspects of our societies, whether we touched upon the financial crisis, the sustainable development, the climate change, the interfaith dialogue, or the social dimension of globalization.

Exactly 120 years ago, in 1888, the British novelist and poet Rudyard Kipling wrote his famous lines: "East is East, and West is West..." We can agree: East is East, and West is West, but in contrast to the conclusion Kipling made, we can and we must say: "But the twins have met and forever shall meet." That was not only the experience of this Summit, it is also the reality of the world.

The world evolves towards further globalization. We should see this a solution, not as a threat. Let's make this an opportunity to capitalize upon, to learn from others' advantages, to stimulate synergies and to raise the levels of confident relations. Because your challenges are our challenges, our problems are your problems.

There is just one world, because there is just one human race. Fundamentally, what is at stake, is the future of that one world, the future of that one human family we all belong to. We share the same dream: greater wellbeing and more dignity for all our citizens.

We might start thinking already at ways and means of bringing our cooperation to a higher level, we should dare to broaden our scope of exchanges into new territories, possibly even looking at organizational and procedural opportunities not only to structure our interactions in a more systematic way, but also to bring the whole ASEM process closer to our peoples.

Peoples in Asia and Europe feel more and more the process of globalization in their daily life. As I already said yesterday : contrary to the situation before the financial crisis, our populations are now asking us not for less, but for more global and international cooperation. I consider our discussions during this Summit as a significant qualitative step to make the ASEM process more meaningful and relevant for the daily life of our citizens: they should be at the centre of our concern and their happiness should be our permanent aim.

Due to the system of rotation of the summits, and coinciding with the Belgian Presidency of the European Union, my country BELGIUM will be very honored to welcome the next ASEM Summit, during the second half of 2010.

It is obvious that we will work closely with the European Commission in this endeavour.

I already invite you all and, in the meantime, I wish you to remain as committed as you have demonstrated today.

In the current circumstances, two years have come to cover altogether the short term and the long term. So many unpredictable events might occur. However, the fundamental challenges will remain. And I see three major ones: global prosperity, global solidarity, and global sustainable development. In practice, it means that we have to deliver on the financial and economic crisis, on the Millennium Development Goals and on the Post-Kyoto process.

With a full commitment and the positive spirit of togetherness and harmony which prevailed so happily here during our works, I am confident that this enterprise of bridging East and West will mark our history.

We are aware of the global problems. We agree on global solutions. Let us not spoil this momentum to act globally.

I thank you.

Yves Leterme