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STATEMENT

Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at ASEF Young Leaders Summit, Luxembourg, 4 November 2015

Check against delivery!

Dear Young Asian Leaders,

Dear Young European Leaders,

Great to see you here today. This Asia-Europe Young Leaders Summit is the first of its kind in the margins of an ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting. I hope you have enjoyed it and found it useful. On my side, I hope we can repeat this in the coming years, for at least two reasons. The first one: it is good that we listen to young leaders like you. You are not just the leaders of the future, as everyone always tells you. You can be the leaders of today as well.

So I am happy that two of your representatives will speak in the opening session of our "adult" Asia-Europe meeting. This never happened before. And there was indeed some mumbling amongst officials who felt this was unorthodox [because young people might say controversial things!].

But I felt that it was important that the results of your deliberations this week are heard directly by the Ministers. That the politicians listen to what the new generations have to say about the future of Europe and Asia.

Rather than speaking myself, I therefore hope that we could engage in a dialogue. That you can tell me about your worries and your hopes.

The second reason why I am happy about this Young Leaders summit is this. The Asia-Europe Summit was "invented" at the end of the Cold War: its founders realised that the new situation called for an alliance

among continents and civilisations. Twenty years on – and after too many conflicts – it is even clearer that only an intercontinental alliance can tackle the challenges of today. Cooperation between Asia and Europe will become more and more important. Building alliances calls for strong institutions, but also for strong connections between leaders. And it is great that you, future leaders, are having a chance to meet with one another. Years ago I took part in many events like this one, so believe me: it was worth it. Everything you learn here, every person you meet might be important to your future.

When I was your age, the world looked differently. After the fall of the Berlin wall, we had high hopes that the world would enter an unprecedented era of stability, peace and prosperity. That the world would no longer be divided in blue states and red states. That a new, multilateral order was born.

When you, young leaders, look forward, you must see a different future. One of insecurity, around Europe; of unresolved and boiling, historic tensions, also around Asia; of economic slowdown, in Europe and on a smaller scale in Asia too. A world where borders are blurred. Because of all these factors, put together, this is also a world where many people are afraid. Afraid of unemployment. Afraid of conflicts. And too often, afraid of "the other", the foreigner, the worshipper of another faith, the migrant. In our globalised world nationalism, "tribalism", sectarianism have not disappeared at all.

Yet, I am sure many of you look at the future with optimism. I am myself a staunch optimist, and I think there are good reasons to be. Inequalities are still huge, but the world has never been this rich. We get better and better at fighting diseases. Children mortality has reduced drastically. And as you all know, a more connected world provides us with so many new opportunities.

Take the work we do on **connectivity**. It is today a buzz-word in Asia; but has long been at the heart of the European project.

Connecting people – or *mobility* – brings enormous benefits: economic, societal, cultural. Tearing down our internal frontiers has always been a key part of the European Union's project. And it still is, although it is painful to watch some of our member states build fences at their borders.

I am an **Erasmus** alumnus. Since 1987 more than 3 million students have participated in this brilliant scheme of student exchange. About one fifth of them have taken the idea of people-to-people contact to a new level, by finding their spouse during their Erasmus stay. There is an increasing number of 'Erasmus children'.

With my colleague, Commissioner Navracsics, I want to enlarge Erasmus to include also exchange with third countries (the so called Erasmus Mundus). In 2015, 4465 students of Asian ASEM countries studied in

Europe; and 2584 European students went to study Asian ASEM countries. I would like to see those numbers increase over the next years.

In this context I would like to pay special tribute to the Asia Europe Foundation, ASEF, for your strong focus on fostering educational exchanges between Asia and Europe: the ASEF Higher Education Program, the ASEF University and the related networks are flagship projects.

Connectivity is also about bringing down obstacles to **trade**. We want goods and services to move freely within the EU. We are proud of the single market, although it is not quite finished. Regional infrastructure – the so-called Trans-European Networks – support this market.

In South East Asia, **ASEAN** is building its **own community**. Different pace, different institutional set-up; but the objective is similar: creating growth and prosperity by making it easier to trade, travel and do business.

That's why we feel naturally close to ASEAN and we fully support their community building. Not to transpose our model; not to teach lessons of integration; but to share experiences and lessons learned.

Beyond building our internal markets, we need to **connect European and Asian economies**. There are more goods and services travelling between Europe and Asia than across the Atlantic. The potential is huge.

Last month, the Commission adopted a **new Trade and Investment Strategy**. For **Asia**, it is the **most ambitious ever**: Beyond the concluded negotiations (with Korea, Singapore and Vietnam), and the ongoing ones (Malaysia, Thailand, Japan), the Commission has announced its wish to negotiate with Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines and Indonesia; and indeed a full EU-ASEAN free trade agreement when all conditions are fulfilled.

Connectivity can do much to strengthen the economies of Asia and Europe, and move beyond the current economic slowdown. But there is another key condition to make sure Asia continues to grow. Asia needs peace and stability. It needs to avoid new confrontations that would benefit no one.

In May this year, I attended the Shangri-La dialogue in Singapore, a yearly gathering of Ministers of Defence from Europe and Asia, defence community and think tanks. I was impressed by how many of them asked for greater cooperation between Europe and Asia on security issues.

And on our side, on the side of the EU, there is so much we can do. The European Union is not just a big free trade area. We are also a **foreign policy community, a security and defence provider**. For our own people and in the rest of the world, including in Asia. Let me give you just a few examples.

- Two weeks ago, the EU signed as an international witness the nationwide ceasefire agreement in **Myanmar**. We consistently supported this agreement, politically and financially, responding to a wish by all parties for us to be involved. And our commitment has paid off.
- We are working with all parties in the **Philippines** to ensure the implementation of the comprehensive peace deal which was signed between the Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.
- There is much more we can do together, in the Far East as well as at the crossroads between our regions. Think of Afghanistan. After too many years of conflict the country needs a new covenant inside its society, a new covenant among all regional powers, and a new covenant between Kabul and the whole international community. The European Union will co-host an international conference on Afghanistan in Brussels next year. It can be the place where this threefold new covenant sees the light.
- The deal we reached last summer on Iran's nuclear programme shows the way: when global powers from all continents cooperate – Europe, Russia, China and the US – the chances of success escalate.
- Cooperation, not confrontation, should be the driving force in solving any dispute in the **South China Sea**. And for this reason the EU constantly engage with all parties over there.

Some of you might know about such engagement, but let me tell you: many European citizens don't. And of course most Asian citizens don't. But when you'll be in leadership positions, keep this in mind. Europe has a stake in Asia's security, and has a stake in cooperation with Asia.

Cooperation will be particularly crucial on a number of **global issues**. For your generation, **climate change** has never been a distant perspective. It is a reality, you all know it is already happening.

The stakes for COP21 in Paris are huge. Failing to reach an ambitious, comprehensive and legally binding agreement would be – quite literally – a global disaster.

Tomorrow, the Foreign Ministers here in Luxembourg will represent 60% of global GDP. If we reach an agreement here, it can pave the way for Paris.

Climate change is already affecting the lives of many. We often forget, and open our eyes only when a natural disaster provokes a new wave of refugees. In fact, the current refugee crisis should force us to open our eyes on so many things: climate, economic imbalances, conflicts. All these are issues we can only address together, in partnership.

Over the past months, we have done a lot to save the lives of migrants and refugees, and to fight human smugglers. In the past weeks, you might have read a poem by a young British-Somali poet, Warsan Shire (which became popular thanks to actor Benedict Cumberbatch). It says "no one puts children in the water, unless the water is safer than the land". Our operation in the waters of the Mediterranean was named Sophia, after a baby who was born on one of our ships. This name, Sophia, is a reminder of what this is all about: hope, hope in a better future, hope in a safer future.

We are working to make the water safer. But we must also work to make the land safer. And this is something we can only do together. It can only be global effort - an effort for peace, growth, human development.

This is a **defining moment for who we are, and for our place in the world.** A world which is more than ever interconnected, complex, and unpredictable. A world where internal and external policies are more intimately linked than ever. A world where volatile social media and short term emotions influence policy setting.

Such world needs leaders. Leaders, not strongmen. Leaders who are capable to listen and to build partnerships. I am sure that many of you have the talent and the vision to be that kind of leader.

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