



Asia-Europe Meeting

ASEM High-Level Forum on Digital Connectivity

Unleashing Potential for Innovative Growth

Concept Paper

(Proposed by China)

Background

Digital technologies have spread rapidly in much of the world, connected people, firms, and societies to an unprecedented level and deeply transformed the lives we lead, the way we work. The internet and information and communication technologies (ICTs) is no longer a specific sector but the foundation of a new global economy and a networked society. There are indeed many success stories of how digital technologies have significantly reduced the costs of economic and social transactions and boosted innovation, growth and jobs. As digital connectivity makes its headway, it continues creating new opportunities for all sectors in the economy, including the MSMEs.

However, digital divide still exists. The benefits of digital connectivity are yet to be fully tapped into. While some in the world are reaping the benefits of an interconnected world, many are lagging behind. Making the internet universally accessible and affordable remains an urgent priority. And there are various barriers to be overcome, many not in pure technological nature. While many countries witness the fast-growing of digital economy, there lacks a coherence and synergy among different regulations, leaving a level playing field for all far from reach. To get the most out of the digital revolution, much need to be done.

With Asia and Europe seeing the fast-growing of digital economy, digital connectivity has recently emerged as a new area of interest and cooperation among ASEM members. At the 10th ASEM Summit Milan in 2014, leaders underlined that digital connectivity is a key element of modern society's infrastructures, and expressed interest to examine ways of enhancing digital connectivity between Europe and Asia. At the 12th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Luxembourg in 2015, Ministers agreed to mainstream connectivity into all relevant ASEM cooperation frameworks and highlighted digital connectivity as a key element of connecting the two regions. Ministers also emphasized that greater collaboration among ASEM partners in the area of capacity building and exchange of expertise is essential. At the 11th ASEM Summit Ulaanbaatar in 2016,

leaders expressed interest in examining ways of enhancing digital connectivity to fully realize its potential of driving growth, creating jobs and promoting innovation and stressed the importance of security of and in the use of ICTs.

Objectives

The initiative aims to provide a chance for policy exchanges, best practices sharing and case studies among ASEM members. Participants are expected to build on the previous efforts, to look into the key aspects of digital connectivity, to exchange ideas, views and experiences, and to work together to identify possible policy suggestions and potential cooperation among ASEM members.

Tentative Topics

1. IT industry cooperation and development
2. Digital infrastructure
3. Cross-border e-Commerce
4. Big Data and industrial upgrading

Programme, Date & Venue

The forum will take place in Qingdao, Shandong Province of China on 19-20 June 2017. It will be organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT), and the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) of China as well as the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT).

Participation

The Seminar seeks to gather a wide range of participants, including government officials, business representatives, researchers and experts, as well as from related regional and international organizations. The goal is to bring together policy-making and professional practice/expertise.

Co-Sponsors

All ASEM members, particularly those who place a particular importance on digital connectivity are welcomed to co-sponsor this initiative. Co-sponsors could send representatives to speak at the forum, make contributions to the concept paper, forum schedule and topics, and work together with the hosts of forum on inviting keynote speakers. Co-sponsors are welcomed to provide financial support to the forum on voluntary basis.

Expenses

The venue and organization will be handled by the host country. Travel and accommodation costs shall be covered by the participants.