On the web links listed below you will find the chairman’s statement of the ASEM 4 summit. In a previous director’s note, it was suggested that if we really want ASEM to become engrained in the daily life of ASEM states’ inhabitants, more attention ought to be given to the numerous initiatives ventured by various sectors from civil society (a bottom-up trajectory) such as universities, research groups, sport associations, NGOs, and labor unions, think-tanks, and artists. It was proposed to introduce consultative forums such as a workers’ platform and a research platform – just like the Asia-Europe Business Forum or the newly planned taskforce – where decisions could be shaped and advice formulated. In the current chairman’s statement, however, not much can be found about enhancing links between ASEM and sections of civil society. Although this can easily be explained by the fact that ASEM is a construct invested by heads of state (a top-down trajectory), we believe that this lack of interest in connecting with ASEM’s basic constituency is a missed chance.

As you can see from the chairman’s statement, the leaders discussed quite a range of topics: terrorism, education, human resources development, environmental cooperation, enhancement of ASEM cooperation, and the Korean Peninsula. In addition, it was decided to set up several conferences and meetings. What will really happen after these gatherings is difficult to predict. ASEM is in need of well-planned long-term comprehensive programmes with concrete deliverables, good monitoring, evaluation, reporting procedures, and relevant down-to-earth follow-up activities. Decisions must be taken and carried out in terms of clear objectives, effective instrumentation, timetables, sound sustainable financing, and a smoothly running non-virtual (!) secretariat.

It cannot be denied that the ASEM dialogue has proved to be essential in building mutual awareness and understanding between our two regions. The ASEM process is a slow and very complicated exercise that will not so easily yield tangible results. Yet, much more can be obtained if ASEM’s gratuities, ad hoc character – now celebrated by the European Commission as one of its key characteristics, ‘informality’, but to my mind one of its weaknesses – could be abolished.

IIAS Newsletter

Director’s Note on ASEM 4

By Wim Stakky

In Memoriam: Hans de Casparis

On behalf of the Departments of the Languages and Cultures of South and Southeast Asia, I would like to try and express the respect and gratitude that we all feel as we say goodbye to our teacher and colleague Hans de Casparis. He began his appointment at Leiden University in 1976 and worked here nearly every day since, almost to the very end of his life. In his youth already he worked here as an assistant before the war, from 1937 to 1939. Later, he came here regularly from London to study the so-called Aklatchen, or prints, of the Indonesian inscriptions stored at the Kora Institute. Above all, Hans de Casparis was a researcher. It is said that when he arrived at Schiphol from London he hired a car for the entire duration of his stay in the Netherlands in order not to lose any time that could be spent on research. His classes were of high standard; they were about research – and indeed were research. The field that he covered in his teaching was broad, and in this vast field he saw the greater connections, above all the long-lasting relationship between the worlds of ancient India and of the Archipelago. His inaugural address here in 1959 covered the entire South Seas, and he had friends. Hans will always be remembered by many, who will continue to be inspired by him.