

4th Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) Ministerial Meeting
6 April 2005
Islamabad

Islamabad Declaration

We, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and other Heads of Delegations from 26 member countries of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), namely, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the Kingdom of Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of India, the Republic of Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Republic of Korea, the State of Kuwait, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Union of Myanmar, the Sultanate of Oman, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of the Philippines, the State of Qatar, the Republic of Singapore, the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, the Kingdom of Thailand, United Arab Emirates, and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, gathered here in Islamabad, Pakistan for the 4th ACD Ministerial Meeting.

Recall Asia's glorious heritage and civilizations. Asia is rich in resources, culture, wisdom, skills and talents. In this opening decade of the 21st century Asia is well positioned to emerge as a new shining star on the global horizon.

Recall the Declaration on Asian Cooperation – Hand in Hand for better Asia – adopted by the 3rd Ministerial Meeting of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue at Qingdao, Peoples Republic of China.

Note the transformation taking place in the global political and economic environment that reinforces the need for cooperation among all States particularly Asian states to realize the vision of an Asian community.

Cognizant of the common challenges facing Asia, especially in terms of energy scarcity, poverty, and financial instability, we are determined to overcome these challenges through cooperation and solutions based on the sharing of resources and expertise, thereby resulting in sufficient energy allocation, the alleviation of poverty, and an effective financial infrastructure.

Recognize the need for resolving longstanding political disputes and other political crises through peaceful means and for enhancing tolerance and respect through political and social systems in the true spirit of peaceful co-existence.

Renew our commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and universally recognized international norms and underline the primacy of the

United Nations and the need for the strengthening of the UN system including the Security Council and ECOSOC to address various challenges to peace and development.

Recognize Asia's growing contribution and significance in world affairs, which can positively reinforce multilateralism with the UN at the core and that in this regard support the Asian Groups decision that since it is the turn of Asia, therefore, the next UN Secretary General should come from Asia.

Recognize that broad sweep of globalization is shaping international society, which is more aware, open, and inter-dependent. Asian states must position themselves to benefit from globalization, enhance mutually beneficial interlinkages and develop positive dependencies.

Resolve to direct the phenomenon of globalization towards the greater benefit of all regions of the world especially the marginalized sub-regions of Asia, thereby alleviating poverty, ensuring better trade terms and opportunities to developing countries, sharing advanced technology for human good, protecting the environment and creating decent job opportunities for all.

Aware that the most effective response to globalization is greater regional economic and commercial cooperation. These trends are particularly robust in the Asian region, which has witnessed important processes that will shape the future of our region and the world. A peaceful and prosperous Asian neighbourhood is our goal, which we will pursue vigorously.

Recognize that the destiny of the peoples of Asia, as of the world, is inextricably linked. Asia is a vast continent with immense resources. We are determined to build upon our rich Asian civilization and utilize economic complementarities in our common pursuit for ensuring a peaceful and prosperous future for Asia and the world.

Underline the importance of cooperation in disaster mitigation and preparedness in view of the devastating impact that natural disasters pose to development in the region.

Firmly believe that we must create a win-win situation for Asia by forging greater cooperation. We, therefore, value the contribution by regional cooperation mechanisms, inter alia the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), ASEAN plus three (China, Japan and Republic of Korea (ROK) cooperation, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), the Conference of Interaction and Confidence Building Measures (CICA) and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Greater Mekong Sub-region Cooperation (GMS), Mekong – Ganga Cooperation (MCG), The Ayeyawady – Chao Phraya – Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS) for

enhancement of mutual trust and understanding and the promotion of regional economic cooperation and integration. We recognize that these endeavours have created a network of cooperation and laid a solid foundation for a greater Asian neighbourhood towards which the ACD has emerged as an important forum encompassing the whole of Asia.

Emphasize the constructive role of ACD as an important link between all sub-regions, building upon Asia's potentials, its strengths and diversity through supplementing and complementing existing cooperative frameworks.

Attach great importance to developing a common strategy for enhancing the future of Asia and its potential, not only by promoting region-wide cooperation, but also advancing Asia's interest and aspiration in the global community. Asian nations should coordinate their positions on issues impacting upon the peace and prosperity of the region and the world community as a whole.

Note with satisfaction the advancements made in each area of cooperation under the ACD, including poverty alleviation, financial cooperation, tourism, SMEs cooperation, biotechnology, IT development, energy security, e-education, agriculture, strengthening of legal infrastructure, standardization, environmental education and road safety, and in particular the heightened commitment by member countries through the coming years to organize activities which reflect the accelerated evolution of ACD dynamism. To this end, we reaffirm the commitment of the ACD member states to:-

- i) Render firm political support to the Asian Bond Market Development Initiative undertaken by the relevant fora in terms of market demand, supply and infrastructure development essential for the realization of fully developed Asian Bond Markets, which would ultimately lead to the creation of an effective, stable and dependable financial architecture for Asia.
- ii) Reduce the high incidence of poverty in the Asian region by reinforcing active ACD Cooperation through sharing of best practices and exchange of information among Asian countries on working children and their rehabilitation by promoting multilateral cooperation on developing and implementing a realistic educational and vocational training programme and by seeking partnership of NGOs, private sector and civil society;
- iii) Fully implement the joint initiative of ACD Agricultural Ministers on priority areas and modalities for agricultural cooperation for the common agricultural development in Asia;
- iv) Strengthen cooperation in Energy Security as described in the "Qingdao Initiative" and to intensify dialogue on the need for establishing a forum on energy;
- v) Identify steps designed to bridge the digital divide among the ACD countries;

- vi) Resolve to ensure the provision of easily accessible and expanded educational opportunities for the peoples of Asia with the proposal for the establishment of an Asia e-University which will be an instrument for greater Asia-wide cooperation in closing the digital divide and spearheading e-Education efforts to meet future challenges, for the benefit of the region;
- vii) Reinforce the role of SMEs in economic development through increased exchanges and information sharing amongst SME's in the ACD countries;
- viii) Increase efforts for the harmonization of standards amongst the ACD countries with a view to establishing an Asian Institute of Standards, which would make the development, manufacturing and supply of products and services more efficient, safer and cleaner and would help making trade between ACD countries easier and fairer. The proposed Asian Institute of Standards (AIS) will act as an organization in which a consensus can be reached on solutions that meet both the requirements of regional governments' local standards, businesses and the broader needs of society including consumers.
- ix) Identify focal points in biotechnology to operationalize the proposed Bio-technology Consortium.
- x) To facilitate transport linkages among ACD member countries and to that end develop a concept paper for consideration.
- xi) Promote the implementation of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development through the ACD work on environmental education and to contribute to strengthening the cooperation among the ACD countries.
- xii) Promote cooperation in the field of science and technology and to that end hold a Science Congress focussed on Life Science Technology in 2006.

Welcome Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Russian Federation as members of the ACD.

Welcome the Guidelines for Granting the Status of ACD Partner for Development for countries/regional and international organizations that have a firm interest in engaging with the ACD, and in promoting the objectives of the ACD in terms of sustainable development and the dynamism of Asia.

Welcome the proposal to hold an ACD Summit at an opportune time to demonstrate our joint political will at the highest level. We will continue to discuss relevant factors at the forthcoming ACD Ministerial breakfast on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly in this regard.

Welcome and endorsed the Islamabad Initiative on Economic Cooperation in Asia as recommended by the High Level Expert Seminar.

Agree that the hosting of the ACD Ministerial Meeting will be based on the core values of the ACD, namely, voluntarism, flexibility and comfort level of member countries, giving priority to countries that have not been a previous host.

Appreciate the offer by Qatar to host the Fifth ACD Ministerial Meeting in 2006, and by the Republic of Korea to host the Sixth ACD Ministerial Meeting in 2007.

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