



**JOINT STATEMENT OF THE KAS-ASEM YOUTH SUMMIT  
STRENGTHENING MULTILATERALISM FOR SHARED GROWTH**

**WE**, the Youth Delegates from six different countries, namely, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Republic of Guatemala, the Republic of Indonesia, the Kingdom of Thailand, and the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, gathered virtually on the 24th of April 2021 for the KAS-ASEM Youth Summit, a youth conference in support of the 13th Asia-Europe Meeting Summit (ASEM13) and Cambodian ASEM Chairmanship 2021;

**ACKNOWLEDGE** with conviction that ensuring multilateralism is very essential in the development of each country in the two regions, Asia and Europe, in terms of economic, social, and political development. However, we also recognize that the path to stronger multilateralism is not easy for the two regions because of the underlying problems they face, especially during a global pandemic like COVID-19, which were categorized into three different pillars following the Asia-Europe Meeting: the social, cultural, and educational pillar, the economic and financial pillar, and the political and security pillar;

**REAFFIRM** our roles as future leaders in the two regions in ensuring a conducive environment for multilateral collaboration and partnership that will eventually lead to strong and more connected regions;

**BELIEVE** that the problem of connectivity and multilateralism in the two regions can be solved by renewing our commitment, strengthening our partnership, and at the same time harmonizing the understanding of each other despite the diversity and differences of the people from the two regions; together as one, we can close the development gaps between countries in both regions and strengthen a better multilateralism to bring peace, security, harmony, dignity, progress, and prosperity to the people of the two regions.

**Recognizing the Problems of Multilateralism and Proposing Solutions in the Social, Cultural, and Educational Pillar**

***Strengthening Multilateralism for Post-COVID-19 Sustainable Development***

**Identified Problem 1: The Issue of Violence Against Women and Girls Across Asia and Europe**

- 1.1 Unemployment, economic instability, and stressful environments or situations frequently lead to violence against women.
  - a. 243 million women and girls between the ages of 15-49 are prone to violence, especially domestic violence by intimate partners, of which there has been a dramatic increase in three ASEM member countries—the UK, Germany, and Spain—as well as the US and Canada.
  - b. During lockdowns because of the COVID-19 pandemic, absences from school and work have led to the dramatic rise of domestic violence, especially against women and girls.
- 1.2 Lack of labor protections and isolation from home lead women who work in informal sectors to face sexual harassment and violence.
- 1.3 Laws against domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence are the starting point to deal with and eliminate the issue.

**Identified Problem 2: Inequality Between Men and Women in the Labor Market in Europe and Central Asia**

- 2.1 The perception of male domination in labor forces.
  - a. The difficulty of women in entering the labor force due to traditional perceptions and stereotypical norms of women's roles and participation in social development. The concept of a glass ceiling has demotivated women from breaking the ceiling and unleashing their productivity and potential.
  - b. The undermining of women's abilities can be seen in most Asian countries, whereas men receive more privileges within the labor market due to having more physical strength and because of cultural norms.
  - c. Women in Europe and Central Asia have been confronted with barriers to achieving equality in the labor market, including unpaid work, family responsibilities, limited job choice, social stereotypes, and the economic impact of the gender pay gap.
- 2.2 The gender-based wage gap in the labor market.
  - a. Women are less likely to be employed, while at the same time being more vulnerable to unemployment. Noticeably, the percentage of employed women across European countries is only 67.3% compared to 79% of men.
  - b. Occupational segregation arises mostly with work related to construction, engineering, surgeon, and other jobs which distribute wages to women equally.

**Identified Problem 3: LGBT+ Discrimination Across Europe and Asia Leading to Social Inequality**

- 3.1 The rise of discrimination toward LGBT+ people and their gender identity, including access to health and other public services.

- a. The issue of criticism of same-sex relationships arises across European and Asian communities which blame them for causing social disorder.
  - b. During the COVID-19 pandemic, LGBT+ people have been discriminated against in social and economic life; made vulnerable to verbal and physical attacks; and made themselves invisible out of fear of negative consequences. This issue has affected the ability of the LGBT+ community to be able to recover from this unprecedented situation.
- 3.2 The violence and hate crime against the LGBT community have led LGBT+ people to live in fear of all forms of bullying, including physical and cyber-bullying, with a lack of intervention from the state.
- 3.3 The criminalization of LGBT+ people is still enshrined in some countries' laws today.
- a. In several Southeast Asian countries, including Myanmar, Malaysia, and Singapore, article 377 of the Indian Penal Code is still in force, outlawing “unnatural offenses” and criminalizing sexual activities against “the order of nature”. Moreover, homosexuality is an offense punishable by death under sharia law in Brunei.

### Proposing Solutions to Problem 1:

- 1.1 Call for strengthened policies to protect women and girls from any form of violence. This includes a multi-sectoral approach including various organizations, each country’s government, and other international institutions.
- a. Demanding the dissemination on legal response to domestic violence.
  - b. Demanding assistance for women, especially during COVID-19 lockdowns, including campaigns and projects on women’s empowerment, comprising physical and mental support.
- 1.2 Call for the establishment of an effective mechanism to help women who are exposed to violence and harassment in the informal sector.
- a. Creating helplines for medical assistance and shelter.
  - b. Providing psychological supports.
  - c. Offering consultation services to women and girls.
  - d. Providing a victim protection program to safeguard victims from violence.
    - i. Prosecuting abusers according to the frameworks and in court.
    - ii. Temporary providing financial help to victims.
- 1.3 Call for the adoption of a joint action strategy and urge all states to implement strong legislation that protects the rights and safety of women and girls to put an end to all forms of violence against them.

### Proposing Solutions to Problem 2:

- 2.1 Request collective efforts in eliminating traditional perceptions of the role of men and women.
- a. Improving women's labor market opportunities through addressing work-life balance, proper working hours, and suitable conditions to promote greater levels of well-being and social inclusion for women.
  - b. Improving and making efforts to eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against women at the workplace and in society.

- c. Members of ASEM should strengthen dialogue and cooperation linkages with international organizations to promote and set up more comprehensive labor market strategies for women to reduce the wage gap and give appropriate wages to them.
- 2.2 Urge for the revision of labour policies, which are the instrument to eliminate gender-based gaps.
- a. Demanding the support, assistance, and measures from agencies with relevant expertise, international organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), and ASEM governments.
  - b. Abolishing laws that kill competitiveness for women in the labor market, such as the law of secondary earners in Europe and the kafala system in Asia, particularly in the Middle East which promotes exploitation and the abuse of vulnerable workers, especially women.

### Proposing Solutions to Problem 3:

- 3.1 Urge state intervention, especially from ASEM member states, in eliminating discrimination against LGBT people.
- a. Developing the right and benevolent school policies and regulations, including conventional sex education addressing gender fluidity in the school curriculum, and educating educators to be aware in addressing and respecting students' gender identity, are small and practical steps to be taken in improving LGBT+ rights and their development and growth.
  - b. Demanding participation from important stakeholders such as policymakers, governments, and civil society to design and implement legal frameworks to support LGBT people by providing social protection such as access to healthcare, social services, education, security, and economic opportunities, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 3.2 Propose that laws addressing hate crime and violence against the LGBT community should carry higher sentences to ensure that LGBT+ people live free and equal. This shall be achieved with collective effort from all member states of ASEM, international organizations, and other institutions.
- 3.3 Call for the state as well as international organizations such as the United Nations to elevate norms protecting the fundamental rights of the LGBT+ community in society.
- a. Enforcing penalties against nations that commit malicious actions toward LGBT+ people, for instance, from measurement conducted by the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR).

### **Recognizing the Problems of Multilateralism and Proposing Solutions in the Economic & Financial Pillar**

#### ***Strengthening Multilateralism for Cross-regional Connectivity of the Post-COVID-19 Economic Resilience***

### **Identified Problem 1: The Impact of COVID-19 on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Asia and Europe**

- 1.1 Lockdowns, restrictions on travel, and less trade have caused SMEs to run out of cash flow to pay for recurrent expenses like rent, salaries, or interest on loans.
- 1.2 Excessive and indefinitely long periods of lockdowns have caused a plunge in GDP.
- 1.3 The shortage of SMEs in Asia has caused the aggregate demand and national revenue to drop, which negatively impacts social welfare expenditure.
- 1.4 The reduction in SME production in Europe has led to a massive unemployment rate, financial insecurities, and increasing risks of bankruptcy and business failures.
- 1.5 Female workers in SMEs have become a target group to lay off first due to the collapse of manufacturing industries.

### Identified Problem 2: The Disruption of Global Supply Chains During COVID-19

- 2.1 Shortage of supplies and delays for items due to restrictions has caused surging prices.
- 2.2 The reduction of demand for specific products has led to the suspension of production.
- 2.3 The halt in the demand for unnecessary and non-essential items has caused surplus supply.
- 2.4 The increase of anti-globalization sentiment and trade protectionism has profound implications for cross-border global flows of goods, services, capital and labour force.

### Identified Problem 3: Increased Unemployment of International Migrant Workers

- 3.1 The challenges of getting fired from work, discrimination, unhealthy working practices, low wages, abuse, and harassment of employees, especially female domestic workers, have been worsened during the pandemic.
- 3.2 The decline of women's labor force participation in tourism and hospitality has resulted in an employment gender gap.
- 3.3 Lack of access to social protection and exacerbation of vulnerabilities and inequalities during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 3.5 Increased migrant workers have led to a decrease of revenue in the care economy, less sustainable living, and slower economic revival.
- 3.5 Unavailable and biased gender-disaggregated data on the unemployment rate contributes to slow economic recovery.

### Proposed Solutions to Problem 1:

- 1.1 Encourage the government to lessen lockdowns, which reduce the necessary outdoor activities of SMEs.
- 1.2 Call for the government to facilitate SME access to state-guaranteed loans with low interest rates by elevating the liquidity of state-guaranteed loans for SME owners to develop their business post-COVID-19.
- 1.3 Call for cooperation between nations to promote and digitalize e-commerce:
  - a. Create a SME Digital Platform across the region to integrate both products and services.
  - b. Cooperate and exchange knowledge between developed and developing countries on ICTs and technical know-how to enhance the use of SME Digital Platform.

- 1.4 Call for cooperation between nations to reduce taxes by 10% for manufactured goods imported goods, and local exports in order to support local enterprises post-pandemic. Call for cooperation between nations to reduce the tariffs and quotas for manufactured goods imported goods, and local exports in order to support local enterprises post-pandemic.

#### Proposing Solutions to Problem 2:

- 2.1 Call for companies to revolutionize global supply chains through the augmentation of technological advancements and process innovation, including digital trade and e-commerce.
- 2.2 Call for ASEM member states to seek cooperation and strengthen multilateral cooperation between Asia and the EU to improve the digitally supplied network, sharing technical knowledge and skills between nations.
- 2.3 Call for the government to impose regulations:
  - a. Impose optimal government policies on closed-loop supply chains.
  - b. Promote local products and establish loan programs.
- 2.4 Call for companies to reengineer and redesign simpler and more diversified supply chains so as to minimize their vulnerabilities and demand surpluses.

#### Proposing Solutions to Problem 3:

- 3.1 Call for the government to work with international organizations to help unemployed workers access healthcare, emergency cash, and social protections.
- 3.2 Call for the government to provide incentives and tax reductions for private sector companies that offer employment to migrant workers who have been laid off aboard.
- 3.3 Call for the government to work with international organizations, local organizations, and private sectors to provide temporary/freelance jobs to youth and stay-at-home parents via online platforms.
- 3.4 Call for the government to work closely with international organizations to produce more gender-disaggregated data that provides a full story of the pandemic's socioeconomic impacts on women and men, in order to assess the economic aspects of gender equality and improve job markets in the future.
- 3.5 Call for the government to create an independent body to provide information about migrant worker policies, registration forms and processes, legitimate employment contracts, and other employment information.

### **Recognizing the Problems of Multilateralism and Proposing Solutions in the Political and Security Pillar**

#### ***Strengthening Multilateralism for Cross-Regional Peace and Security in the Post-COVID-19 World***

#### **Identified Problem 1: The Setbacks of Myanmar's Democracy and the Failures of Effective International Responses**

- 1.1 The military junta committed the unlawful overthrow of a democratically elected government.
- 1.2 Serious crimes against humanity.

- a. Over 740 innocent Burmese people have been killed by the junta's forces during their raids, crackdowns, arrests, and random shooting from February 1, 2021, to April 20, 2021.
  - b. Over 25,000 innocent Burmese protestors and politicians were unlawfully detained, imprisoned, and tortured before 23,184 of them were released under a New Year amnesty on April 17, 2021. The majority of the released were jailed before the February 1 Military Coup.
  - c. Nearly 250,000 people have been displaced during the months of the military crackdown.
- 1.3 Lack of serious international responses by the international community, including the United Nations and its main body, the United Nations Security Council, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and international courts.
- 1.4 Abuse of power and increasing threats to the country's rule of law, constitutional vision, freedom, human rights, peace, and democracy, leading to economic, social, and political obstructions.

### Identified Problem 2: Limited and Inequitable Access to COVID-19 Vaccines for Less-Developed Countries

- 2.1 Global vaccination injustice:
- a. Global injustice unfolded even before distribution of COVID-19 vaccines began in early 2021. Thirteen percent of the wealthiest countries pre-purchased 51 percent of the available vaccines.
  - b. Most countries, particularly those in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, will not have widespread access to COVID-19 vaccines or achieve full coverage until as late as 2023. Some middle-income countries and low-income countries will be relying on COVAX, an initiative led by the World Health Organization that aims to secure 6 billion doses of vaccine for poorer countries, covering up to only 20% of the population of each recipient country.
- 2.2 Concerning lack of transparency of COVID-19 vaccine information.
- 2.3 Politicization of COVID-19 vaccines.
- a. Vaccine distribution has been exploited as a geopolitical weapon, which, consequently, is dividing the world into two camps – one represented by countries with Chinese and Russian vaccines and the other with US and European vaccines.
- 2.4 Concerning corruption in vaccination processes. Governments spend about 30 per cent of their budgets on public procurement while, in the health sector, approximately seven per cent is lost to corruption and inefficiency.

### Identified Problem 3: All Forms of Human Rights Violations

- 3.1 Violence against human rights has been defined in all forms, including the suppression of political participation, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, discrimination against gender, national origin, religion sexual orientation, hate crime, human trafficking, and so on. These forms of violence are rapidly increasing over the past two years despite the pandemic.
- 3.2 Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, hate crimes and xenophobia, and especially anti-Asian hate crimes, are growing in many Western countries, especially in the US.

- a. Between March 19, 2020, and February 28, 2021, there were 3,795 anti-Asian incidents across all 50 states and the District of Columbia in the US.
- b. Women have faced hate incidents 2.3 times more than men.
- c. Chinese are ethnic group most often experiencing hate incidents (42.2%), followed by Koreans (14.8%), Vietnamese (8.5%), and Filipinos (7.9%).

### Proposing Solutions to Problem 1:

- 1.1 Call for an effective international response to discredit the legitimacy of the junta-led government of Myanmar, including the formal recognition of the national unity government of Myanmar, which represents the democratically elected and legitimate government of Myanmar.
- 1.2 Call for serious international action to:
  - a. Demand all political prisoners in Myanmar be freed without political conditions.
  - b. Demand the stabilization of the political situation in the country, opening avenues for the 250,000 displaced Burmese people to safely and peacefully return to their homes.
  - c. Demand the prosecution of the junta leaders through United Nations referral to international courts, including the International Criminal Court, for serious crimes against humanity.
  - d. Encourage the ASEAN community to reach a consensus to negotiate and reach compromise or, if needed, impose sanctions against the junta-led government to put the pressure on for further effective negotiation to ensure a continued ceasefire, the safety of the arrested civilian government officials, and the avoidance of further civilian bloodshed.
- 1.3 Call for an effective international mechanism to bring peace, stability, and security to Burmese society. Mechanisms include:
  - a. United Nations Security Council resolutions.
  - b. Immediate UN mediator.
  - c. Short-term UN peacekeepers.
- 1.4 Call for the junta-led government of Myanmar to ensure a free democratic society, the rule of law, respect of human rights and individual freedom, peaceful democratic exercise, including a commitment to a free and fair election, inclusive political participation, freedom of the press, freedom of speech, and freedom to gather without political threats under the speculation of international organizations.

### Proposing Solutions to Problem 2:

- 2.1 Call for collective international efforts in ensuring global justice in vaccine distribution.
  - a. The wealthiest countries shall extend their commitments to contribute more money to the international mechanism, COVAX, in distributing vaccines to guarantee a responsive, inclusive, effective, and efficient process of vaccine distribution to developing countries.
  - b. Those wealthiest countries shall also provide further help in building facilities for producing vaccines.
  - c. Those poor countries with ineffective health systems that are suffering serious COVID-19 outbreaks shall be prioritized to receive vaccines. Nation-states should begin exploring a

- potential international pandemic treaty that aims to address our shortages and capacity for the production of much-needed vaccines so as to augment the global supply chain.
- d. COVAX vaccine coverage shall be increased from 20% to at least 50% of the population of each recipient country.
- 2.2 Call for better transparency of COVID-19 vaccine information:
    - a. Vaccine-producing countries shall work closely and cooperatively with international health institutions, including the World Health Organization, over safety-related information of the vaccines to guarantee public health safety and vaccine reliability. No vaccine dose shall be injected into a human body without certain health safety approvals.
  - 2.3 Call for non-politicization of vaccine distributions. At this most critical time, the health of every individual should never be exploited as a geopolitical weapon of any country to pursue its own interest. The collective effort of every country shall be taken to combat the pandemic.
  - 2.3 Call for zero-corruption measures in public procurement and public health systems for vaccination processes. Zero-corruption measures can save millions of lives and trillions of dollars. Therefore, the government of each country shall work closely with all relevant partners, including international organizations, international non-governmental organizations, local non-governmental organizations, civil societies, stakeholders, and so on, to guarantee the fairest, most equitable, and most transparent way of distributing vaccines and combating the pandemic, with no room for corruption.

### Proposing Solutions to Problem 3:

- 3.1 Call for all states across Asia and Europe to collectively condemn all forms of human rights violence, committed by either states or individuals.
- 3.2 Call for all states across Asia and Europe to reaffirm their commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and its 30 articles by completely respecting human rights at all levels.
- 3.3 Call for the governments to support the needs of anti-discrimination groups, human rights civil societies, and organizations, and take their demands into legislative and executive consideration.
- 3.4 Call for all legislators of all states to take legislative action to combat all forms of human rights violation and discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, and national origin.

The realization of this Joint Statement will be accomplished through enhanced cooperation among the network of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Cambodia and relevant partners and stakeholders.

**Adopted** on the Twenty-fourth of April in the Year Two Thousand and Twenty-one

**Disclaimer:** Please note that the outcomes presented in this paper reflect the views of the participants of the KAS-ASEM Youth Summit and by no means represent positions of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Cambodia.