The 1st Meeting of the Asia Europe Political Forum
(Seoul, July 9, 2017)

ICAPP/1AEPF/003

Seoul statement on Launching the Asia Europe Political Forum (AEPF)

We, the representatives of political parties of Asia and Europe, from Azerbaijan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan, the Republic of Korea, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey, and Vietnam, which are represented in the Standing Committee of the International Conference of Asian Political Parties (ICAPP) as well as from European People's Party (EPP), European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR), and Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe (ACRE), held the 1st meeting of the Asia Europe Political Forum (AEPF) in Seoul, Korea under the auspices of the ICAPP Secretariat and the ICAPP Parliamentarians' Union in the Korean National Assembly on the 9th July 2017 back-to-back with the 28th Meeting of the ICAPP Standing Committee.

We, the representatives of the ICAPP Standing Committee and major groups of political parties in the European Parliament (EP), agreed to launch the AEPF with the Terms of Reference (ToR) attached herewith. We shared the view that the launching of the AEPF is significant, considering that the exchanges and cooperation between the ICAPP and the major groups of political parties both in the European Parliament and in other European countries will effectively contribute to addressing common challenges such as climate change, terrorism, migration, refugees, scare resources and over- population.

We welcomed the election of Hon. Hor Namhong (Cambodia) and Hon. Geoffrey Van Orden (UK) as its Co-Chairmen.

In today's meeting, we had a productive discussion on the two main themes of "Climate Change" and "Populism in Politics."

We, the representatives of political parties in Asia and Europe, after presentation delivered by a Korean expert reaffirmed that climate change is one of the greatest threats to our planet. Without effective cooperation among the relevant stakeholders, we may encounter tremendous losses in our life, economy and ecosystem. In particular, we expressed our concerns on vulnerable impacts on small island and mountainous countries, developing countries and countries in need of water resources. We recognized it is vital to promote energy efficiency, renewable energies and other low carbon technologies for both curing Green House Gas (GHG) emissions and ensuring sustainable development in Asia and Europe.

In this regard, we welcomed the Paris Agreement as the fundamental ground for the implementation of low carbon economy. We are certain that the Paris Agreement will play a central role in promoting low carbon technologies and green investments. We also believed necessary financial and technological assistances need to be provided to developing countries as well as countries that may be in special needs for such assistances.

For the implementation of the Paris Agreement, we noted that Green Climate Fund (GCF), along with other global financial organizations such as Global Environment Facility and the World Bank, will play a catalyst role in mobilizing resources. We also noted regional development banks such as Asia Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development are important financial organizations for the implementation of the Paris Agreement as well. Other relevant organizations such as Global Green Growth Institute will also contribute to enlarging capacity of Asia and Europe for the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

We recognized Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are integral parts of the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Continuous endeavors need to be made to address the nexus between climate change and SDGs. We firmly believed effective implementation of climate change policies can be an important element of achieving SDGs by 2030.

After reviewing the historical accounts of populism in politics in certain countries, we acknowledged that in recent years, we have seen a broad upsurge by extremist parties, on both the left and right, running through the world. Obstacles to economic growth is one of the causes of political populism. Others to be mentioned are migration, political extremism, high unemployment and growing inequalities. Populists are using crises and uncertainties to feed suspicion and hostility. The populists' simple answers will not solve the complex questions and problems of today. Populism is at odds with progress, democracy and the social market economy. Populism and nationalism are incompatible with a strong and efficient world order capable of tackling the challenges of tomorrow. The challenge is to preserve our open societies while at the same time offering better protections against irregular migration, terrorism and increasing inequality within our societies, as well as against financial and economic instability, tax evasion and international fraud. We need to provide answers to our citizens' concerns; only in this way we can combat fear and insecurity. We must shape a new balance between freedom, security and fairness.

It is necessary, therefore, to recognize and to address concerns of general public in individual countries, affected by lack of understanding of their needs. That must be done with full respect to different individual national traditions, different shape of individual national economies, different lifestyle or working habits. In a more and more globalized world, administration of public affairs is gradually becoming too remote, too complex and too reactive and slow. There must be realistic and achievable solutions of problems offered. Decisions must be made closer to the people, must be made understandable to them and must be realized on the most efficient level desirable, be it local, regional, national or transnational. This is a good way how to prevent more fertile ground for populism in society.

After having brief discussion on the additional topic of “Asia-Europe Connectivity”, we shared the view that promoting bond between Asia and Europe is crucial for pursuing the freedom, security and prosperity of our citizens and the stability and peace of the two regions. Therefore, we have agreed to make greater efforts to enhance the connectivity between the two regions in terms of freer trade, investment, personnel and educational exchange, energy and sustainable utilization and management of natural resources and cultural and tourism cooperation. It was also highlighted that the closer cooperation amongst the political parties in the two regions is very valuable in handling global challenges more successfully including poverty and environmental degradation. In this regard, the important role of media was once again emphasised in providing wider access to news and programme to enhance mutual understanding between the peoples of Asia and Europe, building a basis for stronger connectivity between the two regions, as both Asia and Europe are diverse in cultures, religions, ideologies, ethnic compositions, national traditions etc. but enriching each other with that diversity.

Before closing the meeting, we expressed our hope that the new-born AEPF will continue to grow in the future as a meaningful and useful platform connecting Asia and Europe, thus becoming another major channel between the two regions, next to the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM), which boasts its history over 20 years. In addition, we further expressed our hope that more delegates will participate in and contribute to the Forum next time.

ICAPP Standing Committee supported the endeavors of the European Parliament Delegation on Korean Peninsula chaired by Nirj Deva, MEP in relation to the crisis in the Korean Peninsula.

We expressed our deepest gratitude to the Seoul Metropolitan City, the ICAPP Parliamentarians’ Union in the Korean Assembly and the Secretariat of the ICAPP for the excellent preparations for our meeting and the warm hospitality extended to us during our stay.

Enclosure: Terms of Reference for the Asia Europe Political Forum (AEPF)

Adopted in Seoul, Korea on 9th July 2017