FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Public diplomacy efforts between Asia and Europe are bearing promising fruit

Singapore & Geneva, 20 March 2015: About thirty diplomats from ASEM member countries have just completed Asia-Europe Public Diplomacy training at the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations (IDFR) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The second of its kind, after a successful 2014 edition in Geneva, this training has opened a number of doors to public diplomacy improvements for the Asia-Europe dialogue.

East and West can meet. And Asia and Europe can definitely be more active in putting out joint public diplomacy efforts and campaigns.

After three days of intensive training in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, about 30 diplomats from 21 member countries of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) process have mastered the techniques, arguments, and tools needed to achieve better results in terms of public affairs, outreach, and visibility. The Asia-Europe Public Diplomacy Initiative started in 2014. It is operated by the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), Geneva-based DiploFoundation, and the National Centre for Research on Europe (NCRE) – University of Canterbury in New Zealand, and supported by the government of the Swiss Confederation. „Malaysia, being truly Asian, proves here its willingness to be an active player of the Asia-Europe dialogue‘, explained H.E Dato Mohammad Hussin Nayan, Director General of the IDFR, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia who hosted the training.

All subjects inherent to public diplomacy, from cultural diplomacy to diaspora exchanges, or conduct of prominent events like festivals or exhibitions, have been at the heart of the training and interactive discussions provided for by the Asia-Europe Foundation, DiploFoundation, and the NCRE. „Public diplomacy brings ASEM countries closer, and touches upon the very crucial question of understanding‘, highlighted Deputy head of the Swiss Embassy to Malaysia, Rolff Ott.

Unique in its kind, this public diplomacy training initiative mixes formal training sessions and live exercise sessions where participants work in groups to imagine ambitious campaigns, slogans, logos, and activities to promote the Asia-Europe dialogue. Assisted by academics, media professionals, and experienced diplomats, and taking advantage of the Asia-Europe perceptions study conducted over 12 years by the NCRE, these early and mid-career diplomats are bringing back home to their respective ministries, a new set of talents and ideas to be put in use for the next summits or events related to the ASEM process. „The Asia-Europe Foundation is delighted to help build a new bridge between countries and societies of both continents‘, added Thierry Schwarz, ASEF Director for Political and Economic Department.
Too often, as famed British writer Rudyard Kipling wrote, the assumption is that ‘East is east and west is west and never the twain shall meet.’ But thanks to this public diplomacy initiative, that very statement is being proved wrong. When brought together, diplomats’ fertile imaginations prove to be the best remedy for cultural misunderstandings, and a very useful tool for making political and economic cooperation more results-oriented.

Several ASEM member countries have already shown interest in hosting further public diplomacy training. The next edition is planned to take place in Bangkok, Thailand, at the end of August. This initiative also includes an online training course.

Open to all ASEM members, this public diplomacy initiative will soon launch a new call for applications. All countries and organisations are encouraged to send diplomat candidates.

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Discover our Asia-Europe Public Diplomacy Initiative:
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