The 5th ASEM Education Ministers’ Meeting
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by Ms Mārīte Seile, Minister of Education and Science, Latvia

National Library of Latvia, Hall “Riga”
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Opportunities for the New Educational Silk Road

Mr President,

Honourable Ministers,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

ASEM is a strong framework for strategic partnership. It has grown into the main platform of
informal dialogue between Asia and Europe in the last 20 years. Education is a major driving
force in sustainable and comprehensive development and plays an important role in this
collaboration. I am honoured to welcome a large number of participants representing so many
countries at the 5th ASEM Education Ministers’ Meeting – ASEMME5 – on 27–28 April 2015 in
Riga. This is an achievement which proves that our collaboration known as The New
Educational Silk Road is extremely powerful.

This important event welcomes 57 delegations. This responsiveness stems from the joint efforts
since 2014 in China when the preparations started. We would like to thank Germany as well as
Indonesia for excellent cooperation and their leadership of the ASEM Education Secretariat. We
also have to acknowledge the contribution of all ASEM member countries who have shared their
ideas and experiences. ASEM is a voluntary collaboration process and therefore I deeply
appreciate the time and effort you have dedicated to strengthening it.

We have been heading towards positive outcomes during these last two years and the title of this
meeting reflects this. The ideas, the commitment to implement them and the practical results
continue to develop and strengthen the Asia-Europe collaboration in education. For Latvia the
continuity and sustainability of ideas and processes is very important in the ASEM education
collaboration. Consequently, I would advise the hosts of the 6th ASEM Education Ministers’
Meeting to follow this principle.

Education, in my opinion, is a system of knowledge, skills and attitudes that nurtures respect for
others while maintaining respect in ourselves. Education can be a powerful instrument to
enhance understanding and tolerance between people from different parts of the world who may
have different views; there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that this is also true in the
framework of ASEM. Direct European and Asian collaboration can enrich experiences, enhance
skills, open new opportunities, provide anyone with meaningful contacts and is also a positive
basis for new ideas. This enables increased tolerance, better understanding of others and trust
based on experience and so ensuring peaceful co-existence in our global world.
Taking into account that employment is essential for both regions, quality education is a good precondition for competitiveness. Quality education enables the young and old to gain the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes for professional and personal growth and so increase their competiveness in the labour market. The development of skills was one of our sub-themes of ASEMME5 and we linked it directly with employment.

We specifically highlighted digital skills since information and communication technologies provide great opportunities to improve our educational experiences and the quality of learning. Our universal development depends on creativity, readiness to study and change as well as taking advantage of these vast opportunities.

Mr President,

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

ASEM countries represent 60% of the population of the world and the GDP of our countries constitutes 50% of the GDP of the world. The new Educational Silk Road offers us immense opportunities. We can be pleased that Asia and Europe can work together to improve and develop these ideas.