



Preliminary Report of
the APA Secretary-General
On
Challenges and Opportunities of Globalization in Asia

Background

In 2006, the APA Plenary decided to establish a working group to prepare a Plan of Action for managing globalization impact in Asia. In 2007, the Plenary adopted the text of the Plan of Action in its Resolution APA/Res/2007/03, and decided to establish a Sub-Committee under the Social and Cultural Committee to consider how best to facilitate the implementation of provisions of the Plan of Action on Challenges and Opportunities of Globalization in Asia. By the same resolution, the Plenary further requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report for consideration of the Sub-Committee.

To fulfill this mandate, the Secretary-General communicated and consulted with APA Member Parliaments to identify members to this sub-committee, as well as to seek their views and proposals on how to manage globalization impact in Asia and priorities and projects they regard the most appropriate and urgent. On this topic, unfortunately the Secretariat received no response from Member Parliaments, thus the Secretary-General was obliged to prepare this report based on general observations and previous debates within the APA.

Introduction

In light of the above and based on the text of the Plan of Action, the Secretary-General submits the present report to the Sub-Committee on Challenges and Opportunities of Globalization in Asia. The report focuses primarily on the role of parliaments in strengthening national and regional plans. The result of the Sub-Committee deliberations of the Secretary-General's report will be forwarded to the First Executive Council meeting in 2008 to be referred to APA Plenary for further consideration and action by the Social and Cultural Committee.



Globalization as the most dominant factor of the present time has increasingly shaped a new era of interconnected and interdependent human actions in economy, culture, communication and society. Such massive and great transformation has changed human interactions particularly in market (trade, investment, finance) and communication (information technology, media networks). This far reaching process has brought in new actors (global organizations, international NGOs) and new rules that have major impact on people's lives all around the world.

Challenges and Opportunities

This global trend has brought challenges such as undermining cultural identities, neglecting sustainable development, widening gap between poor and rich, and opportunities that include access to information technology, access to world market and fostering economic growth. Asia that roughly contains two-third of world population should play significant role in the world cultural economic and social development. To manage the globalization impact, human dignity, good governance, accountability, transparency, alleviating of poverty, cultural diversity and access to information, technology and market should be promoted as underpinning principles governing relations in Asian and beyond.

Major Areas

In line with above guideline, the Plan of Action on Challenges and Opportunities of Globalization in Asia contains different proposals that can be classified into two main categories:

- A- Establishing proper mechanism for exchange of information and experiences in the following fields:
 - 1- Advanced electronics, information, and agricultural technologies.
 - 2- Comparative advantages of each Asian countries regarding to their Technological capabilities.
 - 3- Human resources and movement of skilled and semi-skilled labor.
 - 4- Advantages and disadvantages of each Asian Countries in export and import of goods and services.
 - 5- Major financial and economic developments due to global fluctuations and crisis.



6- Privatization in Asia, its predicaments and solutions.

7- Cultural goods and services.

8- Cultural and natural tourist attractions in Asia.

B- Common investments in structural fields:

1- The development of multimodal transportation networks with easy access to local and global markets.

2- The development of labor intensive industries with due consideration to needs of each Asian Countries.

3- The development of necessary infrastructure for tourism.

4- The development of modalities for promotion of Asian Integrated Energy Market.

The Role of Parliaments

1- Common Asian Approach to Globalization

Due to the fact that globalization is a controversial concept with different proponents and opponents, it is imperative, to the possible extent, to promote a common understanding among Asian countries. If divergent views among Asian Parliaments on globalizations remain intact, it would hinder adoption of common policies and appropriate legislative actions. To pave the way for such common understanding APA may plan to hold an inclusive and analytical conference at Continental level with participation of academic and intellectual figures. The main goal of such deliberation among Parliamentarians and social and political thinkers is to define “Common Asian Understanding of, and Approach to Globalization”.

To achieve this goal necessitates a policy oriented debate and dialogue on the nature of globalization and its impact on Asian countries. Globalization as a relentless social and economic process, is creating fear and hope: Fear of insecurity, instability and inequality, due to intrusive nature of globalization in economy and politics, and fear of its overcoming force against local cultures and social identities, as well as its threat to traditional social institutions such as family, education and employment, Hope to generate an integrated, prosperous and fair era with more access to market, media, information and immigration for promising job opportunities.



Whatever the nature of this global trend may be, its impact on Asian people is overwhelming. Such effects may be examined in several fields such as:

- a- The economic growth rate at national and global level,
- b- Global free trade and local employment and income,
- c- Poverty rate, inequality and widening gap between poor and rich,
- d- Global media and local economic and social life style,
- e- Economic globalization and cultural homogenization,

By profoundly addressing these areas in a comparative way at Continental level, APA would introduce a framework that defines the common understanding of globalization. Benefited from such guiding principles APA would be in a position to adopt common policies in dealing with opportunities and challenges of globalization in Asia, either in the form of common legislation or a unified strong declaration.

Thus APA would deal with this significant issue by taking several interrelated measures at different stages:

- a- Engagement in dialogue and debate to formulate common understanding of Globalization, through holding regional and Continental seminars and workshops.
- b- Preparing general policy papers.
- c- Engagement in consensus building process among Member Parliaments to take unified position and action.
- d- To pass common legislations on the most important and less controversial aspects of Globalization in Asia.

2- Exchange of information and experiences

Globalization as a multifaceted phenomenon is permeating almost all aspects of Asian societies. It is becoming much more complex with various linkages with different areas and enormous new players benefited from inexpensive digital communication. Thus we are obliged to identify those priorities that can be achievable in the next two years of APA activities. For that the Secretary-General wishes to suggest to the Sub-Committee the following areas as the most appropriate and relevant.



- a- Exchange of information in the fields of information technology with the aim to narrow the digital divide among Asian countries as well as Asia and the World.
- b- Exchange of information and good practices in the field of cultural goods and services such as film, music, art crafts, painting, sculpture and architecture.
- c- Exchange of experiences and information on major financial and currency crisis in order to face the challenges that drastically affect living conditions of Asian people.

Suggested Practical Measures

- 1- Establish a networking relationship among major governmental and non-governmental institutions dealing with globalization impact in each Asian country, to share their experiences and studies with the view to formulate common strategy.
- 2- Establish “Asian Virtual Parliament” in order to enhance debates and deliberations in an easy and prompt way. Global net-working provides opportunities for Member Parliaments to engage in fruitful dialogue on issues of concern for Asia in a constant and regular basis. This mechanism is not intended to substitute the APA structure and functions, but to accelerate its function in a more timely and effective as well as less expensive and bureaucratic way. The Secretary-General will provide a detailed explanation on this to the next APA Plenary session.
- 3- Establish databases at national and continental levels to collect and compare all basic data with respect to globalization impact in social, political and economic fields in all Asian countries.
- 4- Establish “Advisory Groups” as need arises on specific issues to provide technical advice to the Sub-Committee in order to pursue the implementation of the objectives delineated in the APA Plan of Action on Challenges and Opportunities of Globalization in Asia.