



A News Report on the Fifty-Fifth Annual Session of AALCO

The Fifty-Fifth Annual Session of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO) was held in the Lè Meridian Hotel in New Delhi, India from the 16th – 20th of May 2016. Held on the 60th Anniversary of the founding of AALCO, this session saw extensive participation with thirty-nine Member States and three observer delegations – Eritrea, Belarus and Vietnam -in attendance. The ICRC also attended the Session. The sixth meeting of the AALCO Eminent Persons Group (EPG) had been convened on 16th May 2016.

The Fifty-Fifth Annual Session was inaugurated on 17th May 2016 by Hon, ble Ms. Sujata Mehta, Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. While H.E. Dr. V.D. Sharma, Joint Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs (Legal and Treaties Division), Government of India was elected as the President of the Fifty-Fifth Annual Session, H.E. Mr. Sam Yalley, High Commissioner of Ghana was elected as the Vice-President.

Several issues of critical importance to the Member States were deliberated at this session. These included: Law of the Sea, the WTO, Violent Extremism and Terrorism, the issue of Palestine, International Law in Cyberspace, Selected Items on the Agenda of the International Law Commission and other Organizational issues including the financial matters of the Organization. A great deal of discussions took place on all these items and the Member States showed a good degree of flexibility in trying to accommodate the concerns / viewpoints of one another. In the resultant Resolutions on all these topics, the Member States of AALCO have given the Secretariat of AALCO the mandate as to how these topics are to be dealt with in the year to come.

The Fifty-Fifth Session also witnessed the First Meeting of the Working Group on International Law in Cyberspace which was held on 19 May 2016. The Working Group had elected H.E. Mr. Hossein Panahi Azar, Director General for International Legal Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamic Republic of Iran as the Chairperson and H.E. Ms. Njeri Mwangi Wachira, Chief State Counsel, Kenya, as Vice-Chairperson respectively. The prior nomination of Prof. Huang Zhixiong of Wuhan University Law School by the Chinese government as the Rapporteur of this Group was also endorsed. Furthermore two Side-Events had also been organized. One was by the Government of Japan on “International Cooperation in Combating Violent Extremism and Terrorism” and the other was co-hosted by the Government of the People’s Republic of China and AALCO which witnessed a photo exhibition on the “China–AALCO Exchange and Research Programme on International Law”. Both were held on 17th May 2016.

To mark the special occasion of AALCO’s 60th Anniversary, the Member States, at the initiation of the President of the Fifty-Fourth Session of AALCO and Vice

Foreign Minister, People's Republic of China H.E. Mr. Liu Zhenmin, had adopted the *New Delhi Declaration on the Commemoration of the Sixtieth Anniversary of AALCO*. In this, Member States reaffirmed their commitment to the Bandung Spirit and expressed their desire to continue to use AALCO as a forum to further the progress and development of international law taking into consideration their own legal needs and legitimate interests.

This year's Session was particularly eventful, with the election of the next Secretary General of AALCO - Professor Dr. Kennedy Gastorn from Tanzania who is scheduled to take over the reigns of the organization from Professor Dr. Rahmat Mohamad in August 2016.