

**CONTRIBUTION OF THE ASIAN-AFRICAN LEGAL
CONSULTATIVE ORGANIZATION TO THE CODIFICATION
AND PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL
LAW**

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I. Introduction

It is with a sense of delightful nostalgia that the present writer begins to gather his personal recollections of his past association with the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO), an original inter-regional organization, concerned with international legal developments for the Asian-African Regions, especially at this juncture as the Regional Organization is preparing to publish a commemorative volume containing essays in international law. The publication is indeed to be welcome. His pleasant recollections of the activities of the inter-regional organization are still so vivid in his fondest memory that a memorable record may be kept and preserved for the benefit of succeeding generations of Asian-African international legal scholars. This record will of necessity be confined to but a handful of selected topics of special significance to the Organization and its Member States.

II. Thailand's Membership and Participation in the AALCO

It should be recalled that the AALCO came into existence in 1956 as a Consultative Committee, following the Asian-African Conference at Bandung in April 1955¹, with only seven original founding members,

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¹ See Final Communiqué of the Asian-African Summit Conference at Bandung on 24 April 1955, D. Problem of Dependent Peoples, and F. Promotion of World Peace and Cooperation, paragraph 1, calling for universality of the United Nations and admission

comprising six Asian and one African namely, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Japan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Egypt. Pakistan became the eighth member in 1958, and Thailand the ninth in 1961. The Committee has since grown into a full-fledged International Legal Consultative Organization with forty-seven Asian-African Members with the addition of Australia and New Zealand as its Permanent Observers.

Curiously enough, Thailand's membership of the AALCO was prompted by an invitation from Egypt. By 1960, the present reporter had barely joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand as a second Secretary in the Legal Adviser's Office. One fine day in the autumn of 1961, a distinguished Egyptian diplomat by the name of Ali Timur came to pay an official visit to hand deliver to him a *note verbale* from the Egyptian Government, inviting H.M. Government of Thailand to join the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee and to attend the Committee's Fifth Session in Rangoon in January 1962. Little did the present writer have any inkling that his Egyptian visitor was later to become the Director of Protocol of the United Nations in New York. Much less did it dawn on him that his positive recommendations were to entail far-reaching consequences, as they were endorsed respectively by the then Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Boon Charoenchai, in the absence of the Foreign Minister, Dr. Thanat Khoman, himself the first Thai Member of the International Law Commission, who was at that time attending the General Assembly Session in New York. Both Ministers approved the recommendations contained in the report. To his incredulous amazement, the reporter was designated as Member for Thailand to participate in the Committee's Session in Rangoon in 1962. In that capacity, he also attended the Sixth Session in Cairo in 1964 and participated in subsequent sessions, including the Eighth Session in Bangkok in August 1966 when Professor Sanya Thammasakdi, President of the Supreme Dika Court led the Thai Delegation on behalf of the Host Government and presided over the Opening Session of the Organization.²

of Cambodia, Ceylon, Japan, Jordan, Libya, Nepal and a United Vietnam which in 1955 was still divided. These countries were admitted to the United Nations in 1955 except for Vietnam which had to await its reunification another score years before its admission as reunified Vietnam.

² See the Summary Record of the Bangkok Session in 1966, prepared by B. Sen, then Secretary-General of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee. For documents of AALCO Annual Sessions see the *Selected Documents and Printed Reports*. For orders contact mail@aalco.int.

III. The Practice of Mutual Representation and Cooperation among International Legal Organizations

International organizations with like purposes and objectives tend to develop a practice which may ultimately grow into an established tradition. Thus, at the Rangoon and earlier sessions of the AALCO, the Organization was more concerned with the legal affairs within the region. By 1964, at its Cairo Session, the AALCO began to attract the attention of a much broader audience, including a subsidiary organ of the United Nations namely the International Law Commission. Indeed, the Cairo Session in 1964 was attended by the President of the International Law Commission in the person of Minister Eduardo Jimenez de Arechaga, later to become a Judge and subsequently President of the International Court of Justice.³

Likewise the AALCO regularly appointed a representative to attend the meetings of the International Law Commission in Geneva by dispatching its Secretary-General or a Member designated as Official Observer to the Commission or the UN General Assembly or its Sixth Committee on behalf of the Regional Organization.⁴

Mutual representation also takes place between sister organizations from different regions, such as the AALCO and the Inter-American Juridical Council. Thus, at the latter's Fifth Session in El Salvador, the present writer had the distinct honour of representing the AALCO, coming, as he did, from the delayed United Nations General Assembly Regular Session in New York in 1964-65. As an observer on behalf of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee, the author had occasion to apprise the Inter -American Council of the significance of the norm of "minimum standard" as a bench mark for the treatment of aliens from the perspective of members of the Asian-African Regions as it might have otherwise appeared to their Latin American counterparts, being expected, as they were, to comply with a rigid principle of prior or prompt payment of maximum or full compensation in convertible currencies in the event of expropriation or nationalization of natural resources, managed or operated by foreign companies of developed nations.

³ See the Official Record of the AALCO Session in Cairo 1964 for an observation made by the President of the International Law Commission.

⁴ B. Sen, long time Secretary-General of the AALCO frequently attended meetings of the International Law Commission on topics of current interest to the Regional Organization in the early eighties.

In fact, the criterion of “minimum standard” could turn out to be quite beneficial in another area of treatment of aliens, especially in the protection of human rights for citizens of developing Latin American countries by the local administrative authorities in the more advanced parts of the North American Continent.⁵

A converse case may and has in fact occurred just over two decades ago when, as Vice President of the International Law Commission, this reporter had occasion to represent the Commission at the Twenty-Fourth Session of the AALCO at Katmandu in Nepal in February 1985. At an appropriate meeting of the Regional Organization, he found it opportune to refer to the work of the International Law Commission, in particular a virtually complete set of the draft articles, adopted at first reading by the Commission on Jurisdictional Immunities of States and Their Property for which this writer had the honour and pleasure of serving as Special Rapporteur. In this connection, it became apparent that the author representing the Commission should, as he did, persuade his Asian-African colleagues, in particular Ambassador P.G. Lim of Malaysia, to await the final outcome of the collective efforts of the Commission before proceeding forthwith to enact another national legislation on Jurisdictional Immunities of States, as was previously done by Singapore, Pakistan, South Africa and Australia, thereby avoiding further proliferation of variations in national legislation, which could impede the orderly crystallization process of norms of international law on the topic. It was indeed a fortunate coincidence that no further variations have since occurred in national legislation of Asian-African Member States of the AALCO which might impair or interrupt the on-going evolution of international norms in the process of concretization. Ultimately, it has been most gratifying for the present writer personally to learn that the text of the draft articles as adopted at first reading with slight verbal adjustments was to become the United Nations Convention on the topic.⁶

⁵ See an observation made by Sompong Sucharitkul, Observer on behalf of the AALCO in the *Informe de la Quinta Reunion del Consejo Juridico Inter-Americano* at San Salvador.

⁶ See General Assembly Resolution 59/38 adopted without a vote on December 16, 2004 (A/39/508), culminating in the crowning success of the collective efforts of the United Nations and Organization like AALCO on the Report of the Sixth Committee. For *Travaux Préparatoires*, see Reports of the International Law Commission (1979-1986), 4.1. D. Eighth Report of the Special Rapporteur Sompong Sucharitkul, D.C.L. in ILC Reports 1979-1986, http://www.un.org.law/ilc/guide/4_1.htm.

IV. AALCO's Contribution to the Codification and Progressive Development of International Law on Topics of Relevance to Asian-African Regions

Most topics actively considered by the International Law Commission for codification and progressive development have consistently been on the Agenda of the AALCO where the reports and studies made by the Commission would be discussed and opinions exchanged among Members of the Regional Organization. For present purposes, only a few selected areas of special interest to Asian and African nations in the field of public international law rather than unification of private law will be examined in this brief essay.

A. Jurisdictional Immunities in International Law

1. Immunities of States in Respect of Commercial Transactions

At the First Session of the AALCO in New Delhi in 1957, the Government of India referred to the Committee the question of Restrictions on Immunity of States in respect of Commercial Transactions entered into by or on behalf of States and by State Trading Corporations. This question was considered at the Second and Third Sessions respectively in Cairo and Colombo. With the exception of Indonesia, other Members of the Regional Organization were prepared to accept the Indian proposal.⁷ It is to be recalled that the question was incorporated in the very first exception to jurisdictional immunities of States in the draft articles submitted by the International Law Commission prepared by the present reporter as the very first ever Asian Special Rapporteur appointed by the Commission.⁸ In this particular connection, as has been amply demonstrated, the Asian-African contribution to the United Nations Convention on Jurisdictional Immunities of State and Their Property has been much more real than apparent and far more substantial than generally appreciated.

⁷ See the Documents and Summary Record of the Third Session of the AALCO 1960, Colombo, Sri Lanka, and ILC. Note 6.

⁸ This Special Rapporteur happened to be the present writer as former Member of the AALCO for Thailand, who actually proceeded to complete eight reports altogether, which constituted the entire set of the ILC draft articles on the topic at First Reading. Incidentally, the Second Special Rapporteur to complete this topic at Second Reading was the late Ambassador Motoo Ogiso, formerly Japanese Ambassador to Thailand, also another Asian from the Asian-African Regions.

2. Diplomatic law

Four Conventions prepared by the International Law Commission in this field have already been adopted, of which three may be viewed as codification with a minor component of progressive development, reflecting the current status of international law on the subjects namely, The Vienna Convention of Diplomatic Relations, 1961, The Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, 1963 and The Convention on Special Mission, 1969. Member States of the AALCO have had ample opportunities to exchange their supportive views, which led invariably to their ratification of or accession to these Conventions, covering questions of privileges and immunities of diplomatic, consular and special missions. Indeed, several Member countries have been assisted by the AALCO in its advisory capacity in the preparation of appropriate legislation to give effect to the provisions of these Conventions.

The Convention on the Representation of States in their Relations with International Organizations of a Universal Character has also merited some attention of the AALCO. As early as the Fifth Session in Rangoon, privileges and immunities of international and regional organizations were also touched upon in the general debate, notably between Krishna Rao of India and Sompong Sucharitkul, Member of Thailand delegation, as it was apparent that Bangkok was bearing the brunt of serving as headquarters and regional head offices of most United Nations bodies and Specialized Agencies. In 1962, Thailand was already hosting numerous inter-governmental bodies and NGOs with well-established national and international practice. The AALCO was itself in its infancy, while SEATO, a collective defence organization for the South-East Asian Region with headquarters in Bangkok, already fully enjoyed extensive privileges and immunities as well as facilities and courtesies,⁹ subsequently to be accorded to an appreciable extent by other host countries such as currently India for the AALCO itself and Japan for the UN University. Within the Asian African Regions, new trends have developed which appear to provide more privileges and immunities among brother nations of Asia and Africa than otherwise required in universal context, for instance, an undertaking on the part of the State hosting a

⁹ The Attorney General of India who chaired the final closing session of the Rangoon Session referred to the debate which served to enrich the knowledge and experience of Members and welcomed in particular a new generation of "young blood". See the closing remarks of President M.C. Setalvad of India in the Report of the AALCO Fifth Session in Rangoon 1962.

regional meeting to bear the accommodation expenses of the heads of visiting delegations. This has also become the confirmed practice of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and most likely also for the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Asian Inter-Parliamentary Union.

3. Status, Privileges and Immunities of International Organizations

Following the above discussion, it is to be warmly remembered that one of our beloved African brothers, Dr. El Erian of Egypt was the very first African to have been appointed Special Rapporteur on the topic relating to the Status of International Organizations of Universal Character while the United Nations already adopted two successive Conventions, one on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, 1946¹⁰ and another for its Specialized Agencies, 1947,¹¹ other international organizations were left to provide justifications for their own existence. Thus, the fourth Convention mentioned in Section 2 above should serve as guiding principles for other international organizations, which are intricately involved in the international relations and cooperation among States in the Asian-African Regions.

B. Oceans and the Law of the Sea

It is to be recalled that the AALCO came into existence in 1956 in the wake of the general awareness of the importance of the changing nature of international law of the sea, as coastal States began to extend their maritime jurisdiction further and further into the oceans at the expense of the ever-receding high seas, following President Truman's Proclamation of US jurisdiction over the submarine areas adjacent to the West Coast¹² and the decision of the International Court of Justice in the Anglo-Norwegian Fisheries Case between the United Kingdom and Norway,¹³ recognizing the necessity and validity of Norwegian straight base lines and four miles limits of Norwegian territorial sea. By 1957, the International Law Commission

¹⁰ See 1 U.N.T.S.15, 21 U.S.T.1418, T.I.A.S.6900, 5 February 1946.

¹¹ See 33 U.N.T.S. 262, 21 November 1947.

¹² The Truman Declaration in 1945 (4 Whiteman 756) was the first to recognize what was later to be more popularly known as the Continental Shelf as a natural prolongation of the coastal land mass into the sea. Compare the definition of Continental Shelf in the Geneva Convention of 1958 on Continental Shelf and the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Article 76, 499 U.N.T.S. 311; 52 *American Journal of International Law*, vol. 52 (1958), p. 858 and U.N.Doc.A/CONF/162, *International Legal Materials*, vol. 21 (1982), p. 1261.

¹³ *I.C.J. Reports* 1951, p.116, at p. 160.

was about to finalize four draft conventions relating to the sea, ready for submission to the First United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS I, 1958).¹⁴ In the mean time, Indonesia was poised in 1957 to claim its archipelagic seas.¹⁵ At the First Session of the AALCO in New Delhi Sri Lanka and India took the initiative to refer to the AALCO the Question relating to the Regime of the High Seas including questions relating to the rights to seabed and subsoil in open sea.¹⁶ At this same first session, Sri Lanka also referred to the AALCO the Law of Territorial Sea.¹⁷ It will be seen that further questions were referred to the AALCO by Nepal concerning the rights of land-locked States¹⁸ and Seabed and Ocean Floor by Egypt and Indonesia.¹⁹ Other questions have also occupied the attention of the AALCO and intensive studies have been made by the AALCO Secretariat for all issues before the 1st, 2nd and 3rd committees of UNCLOS III.²⁰

It is to be observed at this point that while it is not inaccurate to state that the AALCO as an institution has had a substantial share in its contribution to the work of codification and progressive development of international law relating to the sea and the oceans, it is equally significant that meetings of UNCLOS I, UNCLOS II and UNCLOS III were invariably chaired by Asian Presidents, UNCLOS I exclusively by H.R.H. Krommun Naradhip Bhongsprabandh of Thailand in 1958 and UNCLOS II equally solely by the same President from Thailand in 1960. The Sessions of UNCLOS III in its earlier years were chaired by Ambassador Shirley Amerasinghe of Sri Lanka and upon his retirement in the later stage by Ambassador Tommy Koh of Singapore until 1982, when the revised composite text, as amended, was finally adopted as the Convention on the

¹⁴ UNCLOS I led to the adoption of four Conventions on the Law of the Sea, although the width of the territorial sea was not yet finally determined. See the Final Act and four Annexes of the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, Geneva 1958, together with a Synoptical Table of Claims to Jurisdiction over the Territorial Sea, the Contiguous Zone and the Continental Shelf, published by the Society of International and Comparative Law, London 1958; UN Doc. A/CONF.13/L52 and L.53 and Cor.1.

¹⁵ Indonesian claim to archipelagic sea initially had very little support from neighboring States during UNCLOS I in 1958, while the Philippines insisted on its claim to historic waters surrounding its group of islands.

¹⁶ AALCO Document, *Topics Considered by the AALCO since its Inception*, at p. 2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* at p. 2.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* at p. 2.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* at p. 2.

²⁰ *Ibid.* at pp. 2, 3 and 4.

Law of the Sea, 1982.²¹ In this vast area of the Law of the Sea, the influence and impact of the AALCO on the process of codification and progressive development of the law can scarcely be exaggerated, much less overlooked.

C. The Treatment of Aliens, Status of Refugees and Human Rights

The Asian African regions have continuously been preoccupied with problems of refugees and displaced persons, extradition of fugitive offenders and repatriation of aliens as well as their humanitarian treatment consistent with the evolving rules of international law. These questions are very often further complicated by political and social considerations, as is evident from the lengthy debate and discussion during the adoption of Principles Concerning Treatment of Refugees (Bangkok Principles) in 1966, which were again revised and adopted on 24 June 2001 at the 45th Session of AALCO in New Delhi. The toughest burden for countries of temporary refuge like Thailand appears to be the principle of *non-refoulement* and the distinction to be made between asylum-seekers and refugees on the one hand, and migrant workers or economic refugees on the other. Difficulties surrounding the definitional problems abound in the Asian African Regions no less if not indeed much more than in other parts of the world besides Asia and Africa. The AALCO contribution to the codification and progressive development of regional customs in this particular area may in turn impact upon subsequent legal developments in other parts of the world outside and beyond the confines of Asia and Africa.²²

D. Miscellaneous Matters

Under this residual heading fall all other matters which are otherwise independent and unconnected but for convenience sake can be grouped together without prejudice to their substantive contents. As noted by the Secretariat of the AALCO,²³ the purposes and objectives of the Regional Organization appear to be all embracing, covering a far wider dimension than the normal work of codification and progressive development of international law. In a sense not far different from the functions of the International Law Commission which could be consulted by the United Nations on any question of legal interest and significance, the AALCO has

²¹ Cited as the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

²² See AALCO Official documents, the 1966 Bangkok Principles and Comments and Reservations made by Member Governments of the AALCO.

²³ See AALCO Official Documents, *About AALCO, E. Purposes and Objectives*, p. 2.

likewise a primary mandate of serving as an advisory body to its Member States in the field of international law and as a forum for Asian-African cooperation in legal matters of common concern. This can cover, *inter alia*, questions of private international law, international trade law, WTO trade regulations and unification of private law. It also undertakes the examination of all topics under consideration by the International Law Commission, including the Law of Treaties, UN Decade of International Law, as well as Environmental Law and Sustainable Development, Space Law, International Transport Law, not to mention, among other things, international criminal law. Among other topics under consideration by the AALCO were Dual and Multiple Nationality, Mutual Cooperation on Judicial Assistance, and last but not least the Legality of Nuclear Tests.

The question of Legality of Nuclear Tests depends on the ultimate determination of the limits of the frontiers separating international law from power politics. It was initially referred to the AALCO by the Government of India at the time when the People's Republic of China was on the brink of joining the nuclear club, while India was still struggling with other matters on the domestic as well as international fronts. Nuclear explosion tests were conducted in the atmosphere over the Pacific near the Marshall Islands in the fifties. The scenario has since fundamentally changed politically as India was catching on, while Pakistan had to catch up. The Chinese and the United States were conducting the tests underground, while France, having lost the Sahara, had to start more nuclear explosion tests in the South Pacific in the seventies against protestation by Australia and New Zealand, both of which instituted proceedings against France. However, the International Court of Justice could not find for the Applicants as the dispute appeared to have subsided once France declared that it would desist from the second test because the first test already conducted had yielded more than satisfactory results so as to dispense with the necessity of the second test in the atmosphere over the Pacific Ocean.²⁴ Two decades later, France decided to resume the test in the South Pacific Region, again over strong objections from Australia and New Zealand as well as the Green Peace Organization.²⁵

²⁴ See the Nuclear Test Cases, *Australia v. France and New Zealand v. France*, *I.C.J. Reports* 1974, pp.253, 457, paragraphs 34 -51.

²⁵ See in this connection the whole episode of *The Rainbow Warrior* destroyed by French Intelligence members and the ensuing arbitration involving the French Government and the Green Peace, arbitrations proceedings, 1986-1990. See Conciliation Pertaining to the Difference Between France and New Zealand, Arising from the Rainbow Warrior Affair, 1986; see also S. Davidson, "The Rainbow Warrior Arbitration the Treatment of French

The Court also found for France without having to rule on the question of *Res judicata*, the latest test being conducted not in the atmosphere, but underwater in one of the atolls.²⁶

Another point worth making in this connection relates to the phenomenon that appears to resemble a moving frontier between legality and illegality of nuclear explosion tests in the ever evolving norms of international law before and after the Test Ban Treaty,²⁷ initially in the atmosphere, but not underground and the lingering doubt that still persists over the underwater testing of nuclear explosions. On the other hand, in an advisory opinion given by the Court as requested by the United Nations regarding the legality or illegality of the use of nuclear weapon, where in the absence of any clear rule of international law and without a concrete contentious case, the Court has shown extreme reluctance to add any judicial pronouncement upon the hypothetical question legitimately raised. Without mentioning *Non Liquet*, President Mohammed Bedjaoui (Algeria) could not resist the temptation of resorting to a separate advisory opinion, saying in response to the question raised that, "The Court can only say what the law says. The Court cannot say what the law does not say".²⁸

An impending question remains as to the qualifications for membership of the exclusive nuclear club. If India and Pakistan have attained that status in practice by acquiescence or tacit acknowledgement as a matter of necessity to sustain an appropriate balance for reciprocal deterrent, then North Korea, Iran and even Iraq, equally members of the AALCO would have to find similar justification in order to qualify for membership of that prestigious club.

This essay does not purport to cover all essential points that deserve mention. It should be recalled nonetheless that the Organization has recently

Agents Mafart and Prieur", *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, vol. 40 (1991), p. 446.

²⁶ See the second Nuclear Test Cases, *Australia v. France and New Zealand v. France*, *ICJ Reports* 1995, p. 288, 22 September 1995.

²⁷ See The Test Ban Treaty (1963) banning nuclear weapon tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water, *International Legal Materials*, vol. 2 (1963), p.883 and Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) (1968) 729 *U.N.T.S.*161, and India's Declaration of Nuclear-Free Zone for the Indian Ocean around the Indian Sub-Continent, A/RES/36/90, 9 December 1981 and ASEAN Declaration of Nuclear-Free Zone for the South China Sea.

²⁸ See Advisory Opinion, *ICJ Reports* 1996, paragraph 105, E. and President Bedjaoui's separate opinion.

been reinforced in its institutional component. For one thing, a new headquarters for the AALCO Secretariat has been set up in New Delhi where it all began, currently complete with an active Center for Research and Training. The Center has just produced a Study on Special and Differential Treatment in WTO Agreements, a timely and meritorious work indeed that deserves the closest attention of all Member countries.²⁹

One last mention should be made of the creative function of the AALCO in the field of international dispute settlement. Institutionally, the Organization has been responsible for bringing into being with the hospitable cooperation of the host countries, not untypical of Asian-African culture, four notable regional centers of international commercial arbitration, respectively in Cairo, Kuala Lumpur, Lagos and Teheran.³⁰

V. Closing Reminiscences

The foregoing survey of the activities of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization may serve to convince legal scholars that after fifty years of eventful and active agenda, the AALCO has earned the right to join the rank and file of monumental institutions that deserve to be remembered in the years and decades ahead, at least in the next century if not yonder. The present writer shares the conviction, based on past practice and experience, that first and foremost, the AALCO will be long remembered for the exemplary contribution made by the Organization over the last fifty years of its existence to the continuing process of codification and progressive development of international law, as recalled and depicted in this short essay by one of its elders within living memory, backed by his personal recollections. At least in no small measure, the preceding account serves as a timely reminder of the width and depth as well as the highest quality of scholarly work accomplished by the AALCO and its associates in the form of constructive, conscientious and consistent contribution attributable to the AALCO which cannot and should not go unnoticed. A glaring example most worthy of notice appears to be the adoption by the General Assembly of the 2004 United Nations Convention on Jurisdictional Immunities of States and Their Property, which clearly displays the imprimatur of the

²⁹ See the Preface by Ambassador Dr. Wafik Z. Kamil, Secretary-General, 3 June 2003, New Delhi.

³⁰ The author himself has been listed on the panel of arbitrators for the Cairo and the Kuala Lumpur Centers. The latter has also served as venue for other international arbitration, including for instance the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) under the auspices of the World Bank.

AALCO from the very inception right through to the very final and ultimate version acclaimed by the international community. This is a source of gratification for any one associated with the AALCO.

Besides, in many other areas of codification and progressive development of international law, concrete achievements attributable to the collective efforts and collaboration of Member States of the AALCO have been placed on record. The AALCO has not failed to leave its distinctive and indelible imprints on each of the steps taken in the formulation and articulation of the evolving norms and practical rules of international law regulating the various regimes of the high seas, territorial seas, continental shelf, exclusive economic zones, marine environment, conservation zones, maritime delimitation and dispute resolution. The records and proceedings of UNCLOS I, UNCLOS II and UNCLOS III bear testimony to the meaningful and scholarly contribution freely dedicated by the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization for the benefit of mankind and the global community beyond Asia and Africa.

At the end of the day, it is the present writer's pleasant duty to express his profound gratitude to each and every member of the Asian-African community, who, having had the good fortune of association and collaboration within the framework of the Organization, may be expected to bear with him and to testify to the fact that each and every one, without exception, will emerge from the unforgettable experience of collaborative and collective efforts as a better and more self-assured person, and as a more modest, more appreciative and better-informed working member of the global community. On this auspicious and memorable occasion, the present writer gratefully extends his best wishes to each and all who may be and have been associated with the service, management and operation of this gracious Inter-Regional Organization.