

**(i) WELCOME STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL, AMB. DR. WAFIK ZAHER KAMIL**

Hon'ble Dr. Najma Heptullah, Deputy Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha.

Hon'ble President of AALCC Mr. M.Abdel Wahed, Attorney General of Egypt.

Hon'ble Ministers, Excellencies, and distinguished delegates and observers,

It is indeed a great honour for me to extend our warm welcome to all of you at the AALCC's 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Session being held at the Headquarters of the AALCC and for the fifth time in New Delhi.

As you are aware, Indonesia, one of the founding Members of the AALCC had invited the AALCC to host its 40<sup>th</sup> Session in Jakarta and they made excellent arrangements for the Session tried all their best to host it. Unfortunately, the session could not be held there as scheduled and it had to be arranged in New Delhi, the Headquarters of the AALCC. I would like to take this opportunity to express my profound gratitude to the Government of Indonesia for all their strenuous efforts for the preparation of the 40<sup>th</sup> Session and I hope that the AALCC will have the opportunity to meet in Jakarta in the near future.

It is my pleasant duty to welcome in our midst, Hon'ble Dr. Najma Heptullah, Deputy Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha. Mme. Najma Heptullah is not unknown to AALCC. She had earlier in 1999 inaugurated AALCC's seminar on the important topic of WTO. Madam, may I once again welcome and thank you for having agreed to grace this function, despite your busy schedule. Your presence is reassurance to us about the significant role India has been playing since the inception of the AALCC.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the Government of India especially that despite such a short notice they agreed to provide all assistance to facilitate the hosting of the session by the Secretariat in New Delhi as well as making a generous contribution of financial assistance to share the cost of the session. I would be failing in my duty if I do not express my deep gratitude to all the Member Governments especially the Hon'ble Ministers for being more than co-operative and adjusting their extremely busy schedules at such a short notice due to change in the venue of the session.

Mr. President,

The Secretariat has tried its utmost to make the necessary arrangements for the success of the 40<sup>th</sup> session. I beg all of you if there is any short -coming, I seek your apologies.

The AALCC constituted by a small number of 7 States way back in 1956 has now grown into a full fledged inter-governmental organisation comprising 45 Member States. Most of the major States in the Asian and African regions are our Members and I am very hopeful that very soon we will achieve the target of 50 or more Member States.

You may recall that the Millennium Summit held last year under the auspices of the United Nations in its historic Declaration recognised the role which regional intergovernmental organisations could play along with the United Nations in the promotion of peace security and development.

The AALCC engaged in the promotion of international law is a unique forum embracing the two important regions in the world, Asia and Africa. The presence of distinguished Ministers and high level delegations from our Member States and the observers is testimony to the importance of deliberations in the AALCC's annual Sessions.

At the risk of being personal, I would like to tell you that it is my first session where I have to discharge my duties as the Secretary-General of AALCC after being elected unanimously last year at the Cairo Session. Also this 40th session happens to be the first annual session in the New Millennium. The draft Agenda for the 40<sup>th</sup> Session includes many items which are of current relevance. To name just a few, the establishment of International Criminal Court, Combating International Terrorism, Law of the Sea, Deportation of Palestinians, Establishing co-operation against Trafficking in Women and Children, Refugees WTO Dispute Settlement Mechanism etc. The Special Meeting on Some Legal Aspects of Migration will focus its discussion on migration issues. I sincerely hope that the deliberations during the Session will provide an opportunity to exchange views on all these important topics and on the AALCC's future role and activities so that it could serve its Member States in a more useful manner.

Once again, I welcome you all and hope that our deliberations will help Member States to get better acquainted with all the topics which we will discuss during the session. Enjoy your stay in this historical and beautiful city.

Thank, you Mr. President.