

**(iii) STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF PRESIDENT OF THE 40<sup>TH</sup> SESSION, DR. P. S. RAO  
DELIVERED BY MR. NARINDER SINGH, LEADER OF THE DELEGATION OF INDIA**

Your Excellency Mr. Alhaji Abubakar, Vice-President of Nigeria, distinguished Secretary-General of AALCO, distinguished Ambassadors and other dignitaries on the dias and respected colleagues and distinguished representatives of member countries and observers, ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset let me convey to all of you the sincere and heartfelt best wishes from Dr. P. S. Rao, my former colleague and President of the AALCO who regrets very much his inability to be here in person as his term of office as the Legal Adviser, MEA, GOI has come to an end with his superannuating on 1<sup>st</sup> May. However, it is with great pleasure that Dr. Rao wished to convey to you all a brief message on the occasion of the opening ceremony of the 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Session of AALCO, keeping in view the customary practice for the outgoing President to address the gathering. His message reads as follows and I quote:

“Hon’ble Vice-President, distinguished Secretary-General of AALCO, distinguished Ambassadors and other dignitaries on the dias and respected colleagues and distinguished representatives of member countries and observers, ladies and gentlemen,

I am grateful to all the members of the AALCO for electing me as President at the New Delhi Session held last year. I thank the distinguished Secretary-General and his team of international officials, the legal officers and staff for all the assistance they gave me to discharge my functions as President both during the annual meeting held at New Delhi and thereafter throughout the year.

I must also place on record my deepest sorrow and sense of loss on account of the tragic death of late Hon’ble Chief Bola Ige. I came to know him well and became an instant admirer of his qualities of leadership and generous heart when he came to Delhi last year to attend the annual session of the AALCO. His contribution to the work of the AALCO, in his capacity as Vice-President, will always be remembered and cherished.

It is heartening for me to note that the new permanent home of AALCO is beginning to take shape in New Delhi and hopefully by next year the Headquarters building along with the residential complex for the Secretary-General should be ready for occupation. With the acquisition of a new home the AALCO will also be acquiring a whole new dimension and depth in all its activities. AALCO must attract a much wider membership and begin to better equip its Member States to deal with contemporary problems of international law. Under the leadership of Nigeria, I have no doubt a vigorous drive for increasing the membership of AALCO would be undertaken, focusing particularly on the French speaking Africa. We must raise necessary funds to make French also an official language of AALCO, along with English and Arabic.

Most of the Asian and African countries at the time of their re-emergence from colonialism did not have any specialized advisory services on international law matters. There were only a few experts on international law available in these countries. The Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee was then founded to draw upon the available international law expertise in Asia and Africa and make it available to the member countries to better prepare them as new legislators of the international community. It is an unwritten but well-recognized tradition and self-discipline of the Member States not to expose AALCO to bilateral or politically controversial issues. The Committee since has become a recognized body of international law in the international community and it is the only inter-governmental body of its kind with observer status with the United Nations. We cherish our association as Members of AALCO which has been serving us as a forum for co-operation in the field of international law.

We have witnessed over the years, able participation and representation of Asian African States in the work of the UN and its legislative forums. Their contribution to the development of the law of treaties and the law of the sea is memorable, thanks largely due to the work of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee, as a forum for developing common negotiating positions of Asia and Africa. Member countries continued to receive valuable assistance from AALCO to help them prepare and

participate in a variety of international law meetings on environment, trade and human rights. A number of declarations and draft principles prepared by the AALCO on subjects like refugees, humanitarian law, extradition, mutual judicial assistance, migration, investments are also worthy of note. Its continued emphasis on the work of the International Law Commission, Law of the Sea, terrorism, human rights, international trade, environment, and the evolving international criminal law will be of immense help to the member States. Besides its annual meetings and the customary annual meeting of legal advisers of member States in New York, it has also been conducting specialized seminars, workshops on contemporary themes of international law. These meetings bring together the best available talent of Asia and Africa in international law. There is need to intensify these interactions.

The disadvantage that the Asian African countries suffer on account of poor levels of development is directly affecting their peace and security. This in turn robs them of their due role in the ever accelerating process of international law making covering every aspect of international and national agenda. The efficacy of participation of the Asian African countries in shaping a just and durable global world order is directly related to their internal strength and international solidarity among them as nations. While global assistance to, and capacity building of the Asian African States must be given high priority by the international community, these States cannot wait only for the developed world to help them with all the inevitable conditions and trade-offs. They must learn to do more with less and in the process exhibit greater transparency in the exercise of their governmental authority. Above all they must be accountable to their own populations and enhance their own dignity and ability to participate in the process of decision-making. They must find local solutions to what are no doubt integrated global problems.

International law is an indispensable instrument to shape a new world order. International law cannot acquire the sanctity and universality that are fundamental to its wider acceptance without adequately accommodating and reflecting the needs and aspirations of the Asian African States. The AALCO has an indispensable role to help the Asian African States in developing enlightened legal policies and positions and play their due role in shaping a just and equitable world order. Towards this end, it must reorganize its mandates and gather necessary funds and infrastructure.

At a minimum all member States of AALCO must give priority to establish a well structured international law advisory service as part of their national government with appropriate status and visibility in its decision-making process. They must ensure development of international law expertise through the establishment of specialized institutions of legal learning. Wider dissemination of developments of international law in an easily accessible form to different segments of the community is also essential. There should be regular interaction between academic and governmental experts in international law within the country and across the regions. To this process, AALCO can contribute immensely with training programmes, organization of specialized lectures from leading exponents of international law, institution of fellowship programmes and exchange of scholars and experts on international law within the two continents.

There is no time to be lost. I wish AALCO and all its members and the new Presidency, Nigeria, God speed and good luck!"

I thank you all most sincerely for giving me an opportunity to be part of the work of AALCO for these long many years which allowed me to work in the company of some of the best international law exponents of Asia and Africa, and exert my modest energies towards realizing our common dream.

May the Almighty bless AALCO, its Member States and the International Community, which is increasingly becoming one!"