

**SPEECH BY H.E. PROF. DR. KENNEDY GASTORN, SECRETARY GENERAL OF AALCO AT THE 62<sup>nd</sup> CONSTITUTION DAY OF ASIAN-AFRICAN LEGAL CONSULTATIVE ORGANIZATION IN NEW DELHI: 9<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER, 2018**

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- **Excellency/Hon. Hideki Asari, Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of Japan to India, [Representing the President of AALCO, HE. Mr. MIKAMI]**
- **Excellencies High Commissioners and Ambassadors present,**
- **Excellency, Dr. Vishnu Dutt Sharma, Additional Secretary, Legal and Treaties Division, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India**
- **Liaison Officers to AALCO of the Members States**
- **Distinguished Invited Guests,**
- **Ladies and gentlemen,**

I am pleased to welcome you today on the auspicious occasion of the 62<sup>nd</sup> Constitution Day of AALCO. Allow me at this juncture to express my profound gratitude to the Member States and Observers of AALCO for the support and the commendable contributions to AALCO's activities over the years. In a special way, I also thank the host government, the Government of India, for their unwavering and continued support to the Secretariat. This support has played a pivotal role in furthering the objectives of the Organization.

**Excellences, Distinguished Delegates,**

Ever since, the purpose of AALCO remain unchanged; to serve as an Advisory Body to Member States in the field of international law and as a Forum for Asian-African cooperation in legal matters of common concern. It is in this context that AALCO has offered much valuable contribution to the progressive development of international law in its 62 years of existence. The relevance of AALCO is even more important today than, perhaps, it was 62 years ago. While our region is now becoming an important pole in the process of moving towards global multi-polarity by demanding more respect and equity in global affairs and contributing to the progressive development of international law. There are many challenges emanating from the international law facing Asia and Africa, making the Afro-Asian solidarity more needed than ever. In fact, 46 and 54 countries from Asia and Africa respectively are members of the UN, making up more than half of the total UN Membership. This was not the case in 1956 when AALCO was established.

Perhaps, this is the time that our numbers and solidarity through AALCO should reverse the claim that most of international law norms of today are influenced by the past practices of the Western States, and that practices of African and Asian states practices are always neglected. It is in this context that, we at the Secretariat have increased a number of activities in order to enhance consultations among our Member States on various international law issues of common concern. We have also increased interactions with the UN especially through the ILC as well as legal advisers of Member States mainly working with the Sixth Committee (Legal) of the UN organized by our Permanent Missions at the United Nations in New York and Vienna.

**Excellences, Distinguished Delegates,**

This 62<sup>nd</sup> Constitution Day celebration is a special occasion for us. We celebrate the same in the backdrop of the 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Session held in Tokyo, which culminated on 12 October 2018. The Tokyo Annual Session, as some of you are well aware, was a significant one for AALCO. The Session saw a participation of 38 member states out of the existing 47 members of AALCO, and it was attended by 12 Observers. It witnessed active participation of member states in all substantive matters including a working Group Meeting on the topic of ‘International Law in Cyberspace’.

We welcomed the new topic on the agenda of AALCO on ‘Peaceful Settlement of Disputes’ and a new mandate to establish a ‘Working Group on BBNJ’ and initiate a “Study on the Question of Jerusalem”, among others. We equally appreciated the Japan’s proposal to launch a new programme next year to support capacity building to the officials of AALCO Member States in the area of international law.

The 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Session was witness to a historic MoU between AALCO and the International Seabed Authority (ISA), which marks yet another milestone in AALCO’s co-operative endeavours in International Law.

**Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,**

We therefore appreciate and look forward to your continued support to AALCO as a forum where Asian and African countries can deliberate on several issues on international law that affect them and how best they can be approached at various multilateral fora. With these remarks, on behalf of AALCO Secretariat, I invite all of you to join us in the celebrations.

Thank you!