

**WELCOME ADDRESS TO BE DELIVERED BY PROF. DR. RAHMAT MOHAMAD,
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF AALCO AT THE INAUGURAL SESSION OF THE
FIFTY-FIRST ANNUAL SESSION OF AALCO**

[Monday, 18th June 2012 at 9-30 AM – Sheraton Abuja Hotel, Abuja, Federal Republic of Nigeria]

Ekun abo- Welcome to the Federal Republic of Nigeria

Your Excellency, Mr. Mohammed Bello Adoke, Attorney General of Federation and Minister of Justice, [Chief Guest of the Inaugural Session] Federal Republic of Nigeria,

Your Excellency, Mr. Rauff Hakeem, Minister of Justice of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and President of the Fiftieth Annual Session of AALCO,

Your Excellency, Mr. Mohammed Bello Adoke, Attorney General of the Federation and the Minister of Justice of the Federal Republic of Nigeria,

Your Excellency, Mr. Mathias M. M. Chikawe, Minister for Justice and Constitutional Affairs, United Republic of Tanzania and President of the Forty-Ninth Annual Session of AALCO,

Hon'ble Ministers, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates and Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization and my own behalf, I respectfully and warmly welcome Your Excellency this distinguished gathering to the Fifty-First Session of AALCO.

Your Excellency,

the AALCO, since its inception in the year 1956, has a unique tradition of holding its Annual Session at the invitation of its Member States on a rotational basis in the

countries of Asia and Africa alternatively. Last year our Fiftieth Annual Session was held at Colombo, Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, and this year we have come to this historic city Abuja, the Capital of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which is the land of hospitality, cultural diversity and scenic beauty.

Nigeria, which is a Country of enormous cultural diversity, has indeed many feathers in its hats. Perhaps the most important of them all is the *Abuja National Carnival*, which can certainly be called the “Mother of All Carnivals” in Nigeria, as it integrates peoples of diverse culture and traditions for the betterment of the nation and for the promotion of harmony and peaceful co-existence in the lives of a people as diverse as Nigeria. To all of us, this Carnival symbolizes the idea that culture could be used as a tool for national integration.

I would like to express on behalf of the Organization and its Member States our profound gratitude to Your Excellency, to the Government and People of Nigeria for inviting AALCO to hold its Fifty-First Annual Session. Personally, I am beholden to your esteemed Government for responding to my request for holding the Fifty-First Annual Session of AALCO with utmost speed and efficiency within a short span of time.

Your Excellency,

this is the third time AALCO has the honour to hold its annual session in Nigeria. The earlier occasions were when Nigeria, after joining AALCO in 1970, immediately hosted the AALCO's *Thirteenth* annual session in 1972 at Lagos. That was a period when more and more African States realized political independence and joined the Asian- African Legal Consultative Organisation. It is indeed my pleasure here to recall the extraordinary role that Taslim Olawale Elias, a distinguished jurist of Nigeria has played towards the cause of the Third World. Mr. T. O. Elias, who was not only a Judge of the Supreme Court of Nigeria, but also was the President of the International Court of Justice from 1981-1985, had played a stellar role in

highlighting Africa's contributions to the international legal discourse. Furthermore, his legal theories regarding the ways in which its rules could be reformulated to benefit the newly independent states had influenced many contemporary international lawyers in Africa and elsewhere.

The relationship between Nigeria and the AALCO was further strengthened by the decision of the Government of Nigeria to host the AALCO's Regional Centre for Arbitration and the signing of the Headquarters Agreement facilitating such establishment in 1999. The other occasion was the holding of AALCO's *Forty-First* Annual Session in 2002 at Abuja. We are confident, with Your Excellency setting the tone for our deliberations, that the Abuja Session is going to be a historic success.

Your Excellency,

Nigeria, which sees itself as one of Africa's leading voices, also is a prominent member of the international community. In these twin roles, it has played a very active role in global governance in different international organizations and bodies such as the Commonwealth, the Non-Aligned Movement, the G-77, Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), etc. At the global level Nigeria has chaired the Non-Aligned Movement, the G-77 and importantly the UN special committee on peacekeeping operations. And in terms of the maintenance of global peace and Security, hundreds of thousands of Nigerian soldiers, policemen and civilians have taken part in peacekeeping operations, truce supervisions, monitoring and observer missions in diverse regions from Africa to Asia and the Middle East. As regards the maintenance of regional peace, even a cursory look at the various engagements made by Nigeria towards an African agenda in areas such peace keeping missions, decolonization of the continent as well as other bilateral and multilateral aid she rendered in the continent, would clearly show Nigeria's deep and positive involvement in African Affairs.

Needless to say that the invitation extended by your esteemed Government to host the 51st Session of AALCO testifies to the commitment of Nigeria towards promoting a world order that is based on adherence to the rule of law in international relations. It also conveys the continued commitment and support of your Country to the activities of AALCO and a keen interest in promoting the co-operation among Asian-African states in general and among African States in particular. It is our firm hope that Nigeria, with the largest African population of well over 130 million and with rich natural and human resources, will forever remain relevant and influential in Africa and World Affairs.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates and Ladies and Gentlemen,

The AALCO in its journey of fifty-six years has been steadfastly contributing towards realizing a vision of international order that will promote the interest and well-being of its Member States. Today, it has emerged as a leading inter-governmental regional organisation, which renders consultative and advisory services to its member States. It has been making significant studies on various branches of international law and conducting researches on cutting-edge issues having contemporary relevance for the Afro-Asian region. In the contemporary world, taking into account the current practice of international law making, the role and range of activities required to be undertaken by the AALCO has multiplied several fold. Hence, it is imperative that the Organisation remains on a strong ideological foundation and enjoys firm financial support from its stakeholders- the Member States.

Your Excellency,

Over the course of the coming four days, our Annual Session would be deliberating upon several important international legal issues that are of critical concern to the Asian-African States. After the Inaugural Session gets over, the Heads of Delegations of the participating delegations, would be making their 'General Statements'

through which they would be sharing their experiences and perspectives on a number of contemporary areas of international legal matters that are of vital concern to the Asian-African States. Thereafter, we would have Three Half-Day Special Meetings devoted to exploring in detail three important issues of the contemporary era; Firstly, the Special Meeting on *“Selected Items on the Agenda of the International Law Commission ”* . This meeting would be addressing three of the most important items found on the agenda of the ILC, namely ‘Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters’ , ‘Expulsion of Aliens’ and the ‘Immunity of Foreign Officials from Foreign Criminal Jurisdictions’. The second Special Meeting would be on *“Law of the Sea: Responses to Piracy: International Legal Challenge”*. This Meeting would deliberate a number of issues as regards the crime of piracy, its legal regime and the gaps in it, and the feasibility of regional response to it. The third will focus on the problem of *“International Terrorism”* that affects almost all the Countries of the world and which depends on the denial of the humanity of its victims.

The Annual Session is also expected to address the following topics that are on the work programme of AALCO; Deportation of Palestinians and other Israeli Practices among them the Massive Immigration and Settlement of Jews in all Occupied Territories in Violation of International Law particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949; Extraterritorial Application of National Legislation: Sanctions Imposed Against Third Parties; International Terrorism; International Criminal Court; and Environment and Sustainable Development. Apart from these issues, the Heads of Delegations would also be reviewing the Organizational matters, including the financial situation of AALCO and the re-appointment of the Secretary-General of AALCO.

I request the Delegates to avail this unique opportunity and reflect the concern of their Governments/Countries regarding these topics and to share their experiences with and among AALCO Member States as it is in my view one of the fundamental aims of our annual meeting. Together with the National Organizing Committee of

the Host Government, the AALCO Secretariat has done its utmost to make all the necessary arrangements for the success of our Fifty- First Annual Session. Pardon us, if there is any shortcoming in the arrangements of this session from our part.

Excellency, before I close, may I once again thank you and your government for your kind invitation and the customary warmth of African hospitality that we have enjoyed ever since we arrived here.

I Thank you.