

ASIAN-AFRICAN LEGAL CONSULTATIVE ORGANIZATION



**REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE WORK OF THE
ASIAN-AFRICAN LEGAL CONSULTATIVE ORGANIZATION**

Prepared by:

**The AALCO Secretariat
29C, Rizal Marg,
Diplomatic Enclave, Chanakyapuri,
New Delhi– 110021
(INDIA)**

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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE WORK OF THE ASIAN-AFRICAN LEGAL CONSULTATIVE ORGANIZATION

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In the discharge of the mandate entrusted upon me by Rule 20 (7) of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization's (AALCO) Statutory Rules, I have the honour to present to the Member States, a brief Report on the Work of the Organization, since the conclusion of the AALCO's Forty-Seventh Session, held in New Delhi (Headquarters), from 30 June to 4 July 2008. This Report covers the period until June 2009.

2. At the outset, as this is my first Report to the Annual Session as the Secretary-General of the Organization, I would like to profoundly thank the Member States for reposing faith in me and giving me an opportunity to work for the promotion of Asian-African solidarity in international legal affairs. I also wish to express my deep gratitude to the President and the Vice-President of Forty-Seventh Session of AALCO, His Excellency Mr. Narinder Singh, Joint Secretary and Legal Adviser, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India; and Mr. Wanjuki Muchemi, the Solicitor General of the Republic of Kenya for their valuable guidance in promoting the activities of AALCO.

3. It may be recalled that the Forty-Seventh Session of the Organization, took place from 30 June to 4 July 2008, at the Headquarters of the Organization in New Delhi, India. It was my privilege to be appointed as the Secretary-General for four-year tenure on 30 June 2008. As mandated by RES/47/ORG 5, I assumed the functions of Secretary-General in full capacity with effect from 15 August 2008.

4. I also take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all Member Governments, their Ambassadors/High Commissioners and the Liaison Officers, in particular, for their valuable inputs in dealing with substantive and organizational matters and kind support extended to me, which has immensely helped me in discharging my duties and functions in a smooth manner.

5. It may be recalled that faced with the imminent situation of bankruptcy in September 2008, I had requested all the Member States for voluntary contributions to enable AALCO sustain financially. I would also like to express my profound gratitude to the Government of Sultanate of Oman and Uganda for providing generous voluntary grant to the Secretariat that enabled it to survive during its period of financial crisis. On behalf of the Secretariat, I would also like to extend my gratitude to the Government of the People's Republic of China for its generous gift of office equipments, including computers, lap-tops and camera. I call upon other Member States to consider making such gifts to the Secretariat. I would also extend my gratitude to the Government of Malaysia for providing voluntary grant to finance my stay in New York to attend the Meeting of the Legal Adviser's of the AALCO Member States and Joint AALCO-ILC Meeting, in October 2008.

6. The Forty-Eighth Annual Session of the Organization is being held in Putrajaya—the administrative capital of Malaysia from 17 to 20 August 2009. It may be recalled that Malaysia joined the Organization, in 1970, and ever since its joining the Organization, it had very actively and ably participated in the deliberations at almost all the Annual Sessions, Inter-sessional Meetings, and seminars/workshops organized under the auspices of AALCO. The Government of Malaysia had hosted the Seventeenth Session of the Organization, in Kuala Lumpur, in the year 1976. It had also organized the Meeting of International Experts on Human Rights in Islam (MIEHRI), from 15 to 19 May 2006, in Kuala Lumpur. That meeting was organized in collaboration with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the AALCO Secretariat and was highly successful. For me personally, as the first Malaysian Secretary-General of AALCO, it is matter of great pride and privilege that the Forty-Eighth Annual Session of our Organization is taking place in my home country, in its new administrative capital – Putrajaya.

7. Since the conclusion of the Forty-Seventh Session, a number of activities and programmes have taken place. The Annual Meeting of the Legal Advisers of AALCO Member States and the Joint AALCO-ILC Meeting took place on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly Session on 24 October 2008 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. In order to address the acute financial crisis being faced by the Organization, an Extraordinary Session was convened on 1 December 2008, at our Headquarters in New Delhi. This was followed by a commemorative seminar on the Sixty Years of the International Law Commission on 2 December 2008. Another major inter-sessional activity, organized in collaboration with the Government of Japan was the seminar on “The International Criminal Court: Emerging Issues and Future Challenges” in New Delhi on 18 March 2009. Although, customarily, the Secretary-General presents the crux of deliberations on the agenda item on the International Law Commission to its Annual Session, as well as addresses the UN General Assembly during its biennial consideration of the item on “Cooperation between the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization and the United Nations”, in view of the financial crisis being faced by the Organization, I requested Mr. Narinder Singh, the President of the Forty-Seventh Session of AALCO to make these addresses. I thank him for graciously accepting my request and making an address to the ILC on 31 July 2008 and to the UN General Assembly on 3 November 2008.

8. My Report is divided into the following seven parts: (i) Introduction; (ii) Strengthening and Revitalizing the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization; (iii) Road Map for the Future; (iv) Activities undertaken since the Forty-Seventh Session; (v) Strengthening the Cooperation with the United Nations, its Specialized Agencies and other International Organizations; (vi) Plan of Action for the Coming Year; and (vii) Concluding Remarks. I sincerely hope Member States would reflect upon the suggestions made in this Report and give their views on implementing them.

II. STRENGTHENING AND REVITALIZING THE ASIAN-AFRICAN LEGAL CONSULTATIVE ORGANIZATION

9. The successful implementation of any organization's objectives and functions is to ensure its continued relevance in all aspects. It has been tested and proved that an organization's survival through the test of time is its adaptability and ability to ensure that it is relevant and useful to the community at large in good and bad times. Thus the vision, mission and objectives of the organization, must be translated on the ground and in order to do so, what is envisioned by the leaders must therefore be translated in terms of implementing and materializing the goals and objectives of the organization. What is envisioned by the leaders must also be shared by the community on the ground.

10. As the only inter-governmental organization that embrace the two continents of Asia and Africa, the AALCO, in fifty-four years of its existence has contributed significantly to the twin objectives of advancement of rule of law in international affairs, and promotion of Asian-African perspectives in the progressive development and codification of international law. It must continue to complement and harmonize the work of the United Nations and possibly to enlarge the current scope of activities in order to ensure AALCO's relevance within the Asian and African communities.

11. It is imperative for any organization, in order to be successful, to revisit the purpose of its existence. Thus, re-affirming AALCO's existence is a manifestation of recognizing AALCO's contribution to the Asian and African communities since its inception. The existence of any organization is for a purpose. Like any other organization, AALCO's mainstay as stated in its purpose and objective is primarily to serve 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. Secondly, AALCO must continue its efforts in assisting Member States in considering and deliberating on issues related to international law that may be referred to and to make such recommendations to governments as deemed necessary. Thirdly, as a body representing the Asian and African communities, it must communicate with the consensus of the governments of the Member States, its views on matters of international law referred to it, to the United Nations, other institutions and international organizations.

12. With these objectives in mind, a thematic debate amongst the Heads of Delegations on "Strengthening and Revitalizing the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization", is tentatively scheduled during the Forty-Eighth Annual Session. In this regard, I venture out to make some preliminary proposals for the kind consideration of the Member States. I look forward to receiving guidance from the respected Heads of Delegations of our Member States on these proposals. I also welcome more ideas and proposals from our Member States, in order to strengthen and revitalize the vision, mission and objective of our Organization – the AALCO. Annexed to this Report is the Secretariat's Draft on the "Putrajaya Declaration on Revitalizing and Strengthening the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization" for the kind consideration of the Member States. I sincerely hope these would serve as a facilitative tool for Member States to decide upon the course of action to be followed in this regard.

A. Measures to Improve the Financial Situation of the AALCO

13. Firm measures are required to place the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO) on a strong financial footing. The financial crisis faced by the AALCO is primarily due to two main reasons. First, the large amount of outstanding arrears of contributions due from some Member States, which is about \$1.3 million, and second, the annual contributions from Member States have not been revised for the last 16 years.

14. It is important to note that the only financial source of income for AALCO is in the form of regular annual contributions it receives from its Member States. The total expected annual contribution from 47 Member States is USD 435, 395; however, the actual receipt varies from year to year, and is generally in the range of USD 250,000 to 255,000. This is despite the fact that the Organization since its inception has been functioning on a very modest budget- perhaps the smallest for an international organization.

15. The minimum costs of running the Secretariat have considerably increased during last couple of years due to various factors, including high cost of maintenance of the Headquarters of AALCO and the Secretary-General's Residence and the salary expenditure. The salaries of the locally recruited staff in the Secretariat were recently enhanced as per the recommendations of the Sixth Pay Commission of the Government of India in June 2007. Because of these reasons, the total amount required to maintain the Secretariat is estimated to be approximately \$500,000 this year. Ironically, the budget for the year 2009 is only USD 435,895. The Secretariat has made all possible efforts to minimize and curtail the operational costs. It would be hampering all activities, if the Secretariat is to further minimize the costs.

16. The total income of AALCO as per the budget for 2009 is USD 435,895, which can not cover all the expenses required to maintain the Secretariat. It is expected that the total amount of the income for 2010 including the collection of arrears would not be more than USD 350,000. After the Extraordinary Session held in December 2008 last year AALCO received about USD 80,000 as "Voluntary Contributions" from two Member States, on account of which AALCO could save itself from becoming bankrupt. As far as the current year 2009 is concerned, the Secretariat liquefied USD 140,000 from its "Reserve Fund" in February 2009. Therefore, presently the AALCO does not have any money in its Reserve Fund, and the Secretariat can only sustain itself till the end of this year, provided it could collect USD 400,000 of contributions from Member States including arrears this year.

1. Current Financial Situation

17. Allow me to highlight the reasons for the current financial crisis faced by AALCO, which include (i) the mass accumulation of arrears, (ii) non-revision of scale of contribution, (iii) inflation and devaluation of US Dollar, and (iv) high maintenance and operational costs in the permanent Headquarters building.

18. *Firstly*, AALCO depends on the annual contribution from Member States as the only source of income. Massive accumulation of arrears has clearly put the Organization in a very severe financial crisis. Non-payment of annual contribution is a violation of the financial commitment to AALCO. Resolutions adopted at the various Annual Sessions had urged the Member States who are in arrears to take urgent steps to clear expeditiously the same and in order to enjoy the right to get involved actively in various official events stipulated in the Statutes and Statutory Rules of AALCO.

19. *Secondly*, on revision of the scale of assessed contributions, Member States would kindly recall that the previous revision of the contribution was 16 years ago in the year 1993, whereas in any other International Organization, particularly the United Nations, scale of contribution is revised after every three years. Even if all the Member States of AALCO pay their regular annual contribution, the total income would be US \$ 435, 395, which is far less than our estimated expenditure in the budget for the year 2010. A perusal of AALCO's budget in the last few years would evidently reveal that AALCO's budget is consistently under deficit. Due to the increase in activities and high inflation rates, the annual expenditure of AALCO has gone up considerably, and AALCO has reached a situation where it has to request the Member States to agree to revise their annual contribution, failing which sustenance of the Organization is doubtful.

20. *Thirdly*, during the last decade, there has been a steady inflation in India both on account of domestic and global financial factors. The natural fall out of this has been a sharp rise in the cost of living in India. The prices of almost all essential commodities indispensable to the day-to-day operations of the Secretariat have shot up. AALCO has suffered the effects of the surge in the prices severely. It is a well known fact that all the budgetary contributions from Member States of AALCO are made in US dollars and for the past many years, the exchange rate for US dollar vis-a vis Indian Rupee has depreciated drastically on account of devaluation of US dollars progressively. Among the detrimental effects of dollar depreciation include the higher commodity prices and its negative effects on finance. It also entails that even if there is a difference of only one or two rupees per dollar, it would create huge deficit in the budget. Hence it has a heavy financial bearing on the overall balance of payments account of AALCO.

21. *Last but not least*, is the high maintenance and operational costs in the Permanent Headquarters building. Besides maintenance, the Headquarters annual electricity and water charges have also substantially raised taking into account the use of the centralized Air Conditioning Units, modern conference facilities and so on. The Secretariat has already shut down the passenger lift, and many of the air conditioning systems due to the financial crisis. Most of the equipments which have huge electricity consumption have been closed. Other steps to cut expenses include not holding the customary Constitution Day reception, reducing the duration of official visits abroad, curtailing sundry expenses of Secretariat as well as ensuring minimal use of paper for printing.

2. Action Plan to Collect Arrears

22. To tide over the current precarious financial situation of AALCO an “Action Plan” was approved by the Member States during the Extraordinary Session.¹ As per the Action Plan, the Member States in arrears have been divided into two heads: first, Member States which are in arrears for less than ten years; second, Member States in arrears for more than ten years. The Secretary-General was requested to take necessary follow-up action with these States. Accordingly, the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretaries-General have been regularly meeting the Heads of Diplomatic Missions and Liaison Officers of these Member States in New Delhi. Since then, a significant amount of exchange of correspondence has also taken place on the subject. Member States with arrears for more than ten years have been suggested to sign a Memorandum of Understanding facilitating their payment of arrears in installments in “Eight-Years Plan”.

3. Voluntary Contributions

23. The Secretariat of AALCO welcomes Voluntary Contributions from its Member States. The Secretariat is well aware, that the Member States that pay their Annual Contributions cannot be asked to pay more than their share. AALCO may, request Member States which have paid their contribution for the year 2009, to consider another contribution, “voluntary Contribution”. When the Organization is facing the worst financial crisis ever, and is on the brink of “bankruptcy” it is expected that the Member States would take initiative to contribute generously in the form of Voluntary Contributions, to bridge the huge deficit that faces the Organization, and provide it with sustainability till it gets its financial status back on the tracks. Bearing this situation in mind the Secretariat urges those Member States who are financially better placed than their contemporaries to pay towards this fund. AALCO would appreciate such contributions at any time in the near future.

4. Proposal to Revise the Assessed Scale of Contribution

24. It may be recalled that the current budget is based upon the scale of contributions revised in 1993. The Secretariat, since then, has been working upon zero nominal growth in the core budget. Despite the negative impacts of substantial sum of arrears, inflationary pressure, rising operational expenses, the Secretariat has been doing its best to cut costs. However, I would like to emphasize that these cuts should not place the Secretariat without any functional competence, reduce the quality of its work and compromise upon the mandate.

25. It is necessary more than ever before that the Member States dwell on the imperative of revising the scale of assessed contribution as a long-term measure. It may be recalled that the last such revision had taken place in 1993, almost sixteen years ago, whereas in any other International Organization, particularly the United Nations, scale of contribution is revised every three years. I would like to emphasize that a process has to be set in motion to revise the Scale of Contributions at the forthcoming Forty-Eighth

¹ AALCO/ES (NEW DELHI)/2008/ORG. 1 from page numbers 7-9.

Session. The matter has also been under the consideration of the Advisory Panel of Member States of AALCO and the Chairperson of the Advisory Panel would be placing before the forthcoming Annual Session the recommendations. In this regard, I solicit the valuable support from all our Member States.

5. Increasing the Membership of AALCO

26. 47 States are currently Member States of AALCO. 32 of these are Asian States and 15 are African States. In the informal regional grouping system that exists in the United Nations, both Asia and Africa account for 53 countries each. Therefore, both within the Asian and African continent, immense scope for widening the membership base of the AALCO exists. Building upon the efforts put in by my distinguished predecessors, alongwith my deputies, I have approached the Heads of Diplomatic Missions of several of these countries in New Delhi. We have received some positive responses from some of these States and the matter of their joining AALCO is under the active consideration of their respective Governments. In case, these States become Member States of AALCO their perspective contributions would strengthen financial stabilities of AALCO.

6. Replenishment of Reserve Fund

27. Rule 27 (3) of the Statutory Rules of the Organization authorizes the Secretary-General to maintain a reserve fund. To strengthen and firmly put the Organization, on a firm financial footing, it is essential that an adequate Reserve Fund is maintained by the Organization. The amount kept in Reserve Fund should at least be enough so that it could meet the expenses of the Organization for at least a period of six-months. With this objective, in mind, it is essential to replenish the Reserve Fund of AALCO.

B. Addressing Legal Problems / International Law Issues: Some Proposals

28. It may be recalled that the founding fathers of AALCO had conceived it on the pattern of the International Law Commission of the United Nations. Towards that end, they contemplated establishment of a body composed of individuals as 'Members' to be nominated by Governments of Member States.² In practice, however, the participation in the AALCO's Annual Sessions and in inter-sessional meetings has been through Government Delegations primarily composed of officials from different Government Departments. The Organization has been able to function like any other inter-governmental organization proceeding on the basis that the Organization was composed of participating States and the Leaders of the Delegations nominated by them for each of the Sessions functioned as 'Members' within the statutory framework of the Organization.

² Article 5 of the Statutes of AALCO (Revised and adopted at the Bali Session 2004) provides that: "The Legal Expert nominated by the government of a Member State shall serve the Organization as Member. Alternate Members and Advisors may also be nominated if considered necessary."

29. I propose that this provision in the AALCO's Statutes may be put into effective practice, for the objective of increasing the realization of Asian-African perspectives in international law-making. The AALCO needs to work as a consultative forum on a regular and continuous basis and its work remains demonstrable to the wider world. To achieve this, it is my vision to promote the seat of AALCO Secretariat in New Delhi as the focal point, for Asian-African States in international law-making, as Geneva is considered to be for the International Law Commission of the United Nations. Utilizing this statutory provision, I propose that the AALCO should also consider establishing smaller Expert Groups, that meets, keeping in view exigencies of work, during the Inter-Sessional period, and comes out with its recommendations on the topic/issue and places it for the consideration of the next Annual Session.

30. In line with this objective, I also propose that the AALCO should take advantage of the presence of eminent international lawyers within its forum and request them to be the Special Rapporteurs on a contemporary area of relevance in international law to its Member States.

31. It is also essential to encourage and develop young scholarship in International Law in the Asian-African countries. To realize this objective, I propose that a "Young Jurist Conference" may be convened on the sidelines of the Annual Session. This would render an opportunity to these scholars, particularly from that country and the region, in which the Annual Session takes place to interact with the legal luminaries attending the Session and benefit from their experience and scholarship.

C. Consideration of Agenda Items

32. The Work Programme of AALCO, comprises first, follow-up of the work of the International Law Commission; second, topics that have been placed on the agenda on reference by a Member State; and third, topics placed on the *suo-moto* initiative of the Secretary-General. Currently, there are following 15 items on the agenda of AALCO:

1. Report on Matters Relating to the Work of the International Law Commission at its Sixtieth Session
2. Law of the Sea
3. The Status and Treatment of Refugees
4. 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
5. Legal Protection of Migrant Workers
6. Extraterritorial Application of National Legislation: Sanctions Imposed Against Third Parties
7. International Terrorism
8. Establishing Cooperation Against Trafficking in Women and Children
9. The International Criminal Court: Recent Developments
10. Environment and Sustainable Development
11. An Effective International Legal Instrument Against Corruption

12. Report on the Work of UNCITRAL and Other International Organizations in the Field of International Trade Law
13. WTO as a Framework Agreement and Code of Conduct for World Trade
14. Expressions of Folklore and its International Protection
15. Human Rights in Islam

1. Consideration of the Agenda Items at the Forty-Eighth Session

33. It may be recalled that since the Forty-Second (Seoul, 2003) Session, the Organization, has adopted a policy of rationalization of agenda items, and out of these 15 items, 8 or 9, depending upon the current relevance of the topic are placed on the agenda of the Annual Session. In furtherance of this policy, for the Forty-Eighth Session following four agenda items are placed in the category of deliberated items:

- Report on Matters Relating to the Work of the International Law Commission at its Sixtieth Session;
- 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;
- The International Criminal Court: Recent Developments; and
- WTO as a Framework Agreement and Code of Conduct for World Trade.

34. In addition, to the above-mentioned topics, a new item entitled “Managing Global Financial Crisis: Sharing of Experience” has been proposed by me under Article 1 (b) of the AALCO’s Statutes which provides for exchange of views, experiences and information on matters of common concern having legal implications and to make recommendations thereto if necessary. Accordingly, at the Forty-Eighth Session, AALCO Member States can share their experience on how they have dealt with the financial crisis. This would include policy and regulatory framework initiated in the respective Member States, so as to find the common basis for handling such a crisis. In this regard, the AALCO Secretariat proposes to convene a panel of experts who could share their country experiences with regard to the financial and banking regulations. The secretariat would do the necessary follow-up based on the outcome/mandate of the forthcoming Annual Session.

35. Furthermore, two half-day special meetings on the agenda items of Establishing Cooperation against Trafficking in Women and Children and the Law of the Sea will also be convened. The theme of the first meeting organized jointly with the Government of Malaysia and Asia Regional Trafficking in Persons Project (ARTIP) would be on “Transnational Migration - Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants”. The theme of the second meeting organized jointly with International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) and the Government of Malaysia would be on “The Law of the Sea”. These meetings are scheduled to take place in conjunction with the Forty-Eighth Session on 19 August 2009.

2. Proposals for Prospective Consideration of Agenda Items

36. Several suggestions, such as to consider a topic only at three successive Annual Sessions or retain the topic on the agenda, but place it on the agenda as and when required basis or time-bound deliberations of topics etc., have been received from Member States. These proposals, I believe are certainly based upon the desire of the Member States to ensure that the AALCO continuously moulds its work-programme to reach out to newer frontiers of international law. Building upon the policy of rationalization of agenda items, and the guidance received from Member States, I propose, that while follow-up of the work of the International Law Commission is the statutory obligation for our Organization, as regards, other items; they may be placed under the category “as and when required”. Based upon the contemporary relevance and developments in these topics, in consultation with the Liaison Officers and the host Government of an Annual Session these topics may be placed on the provisional agenda of the forthcoming Annual Session. In addition, to this, a time-limit, depending upon the relevance and contemporary importance for consideration of any topic could also be fixed. This would ensure that the work is accomplished to the satisfaction of Member States within that stipulated period.

D. Proposal to Designate Heads of Diplomatic Missions of AALCO Member States in New Delhi as Permanent Representative to the AALCO

37. The city of New Delhi is host to 135 Diplomatic Missions of different countries. 45 Asian States and 32 African States have their diplomatic presence in New Delhi. Out of 47 of our Member States, 43 have their Diplomatic Missions in New Delhi. Three of our Member States, namely, Cameroon, The Gambia and Sierra Leone are not represented in New Delhi.

38. In order to enhance the stature and profile of AALCO, particularly within, the diplomatic community, based in New Delhi, I propose that the Member States may kindly consider designating their Ambassadors / High Commissioners / Head of Missions in New Delhi also as Permanent Representative to the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization. Accreditation of Heads of Diplomatic Missions to AALCO would at a policy level ensure that these high-level representatives of States are directly associated with the growth and development of AALCO, particularly in enhancing its membership and in overseeing organizational and financial matters. As a first step, towards realizing this objective, I propose, that at least, one annual meeting of the Ambassadors of AALCO Member States in New Delhi, designated as the Permanent Representative to AALCO is convened. The meeting may be chaired by the Head of the Mission of the Member State holding the Presidency of the Organization.

E. Proposal to Establish a Regional Office for AALCO in Africa

39. The representative of Kenya at the Meeting of Legal Advisers of AALCO Member States, held on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly Session, in New York, on 24 October 2008, called for the establishment of a Regional Office for AALCO in

Africa to cement its presence in the African region. This is a welcome proposal. I call upon the Member States, to reflect upon this proposal.

40. Tremendous potential for promoting the work of AALCO in the African continent exists. Out of 53 countries in the African group, only 15 are Member States of AALCO, thus vast scope of enhancing the membership base in Africa exists for the Organization. Furthermore, in future, such a Regional Office of AALCO could be the base for conducting capacity-building programmes in the African continent. Realization of this idea would require raising of substantial resources, both in human and material terms.

F. Digitizing AALCO's Publications: Moving Towards the 'Paperless Office'

41. I propose that AALCO should gradually transform itself into a "paperless office". This would *inter alia* ensure productivity gains, costs savings, space saving, the need to share information and reduced environmental impact. Attainment of the objective of paperless office requires working with minimal paper and converting all forms of documentation to digital form.

42. In this regard, I wish to invite your attention that the Secretariat of AALCO brings out several publications, that includes Reports, Verbatim Records, etc., of the Annual Session, Inter-Sessional Meetings and various other meetings. The Organization needs to take advantage of the on-going Digital Revolution. In this regard, therefore, I propose that the Organization adopts a policy that encourages bringing out publications in digital format. As a first step in this direction, it is suggested that instead of bringing out the Verbatim Record of the Meetings, a digital recording of the proceedings may be disseminated in compact discs to Member States. The proceedings of the Annual Sessions, as well as other meetings, subject to availability of resources, in video version could also be uploaded on the website of our Organization.

43. AALCO has a rich history of Forty-Seven Annual Sessions. The documents of these Annual Sessions contain a rich repository of Asian-African practice of international law. After assuming the Office of Secretary-General, I had initiated a process to convert these records into digital format. It is a time consuming process, however, I am quite confident that at the Fiftieth Annual Session in 2011 the Secretariat would be able to place before the Member States these documents in digital format.

44. AALCO Yearbook constitutes the most important vehicle of dissemination of information about the work of AALCO. I propose that this publication may be retained in its existing book-form; to ensure continuity, as also maintain its importance in being the key reference material on AALCO's work. In addition, I propose to bring out the proceedings of the Special Day Meetings in the form of a thematic study.

G. Commemorating the Fiftieth Annual Session in 2011

45. The year 2011 would mark another milestone in the journey of AALCO. That year the Organization would be holding its Fiftieth Annual Session. It needs to be

commemorated in an appropriate manner. It may be recalled that the First Annual Session of AALCO was held, in New Delhi, India, from 18 to 27 April 1957. Thus, the Fiftieth Annual Session would be an important occasion to reflect upon the past achievements and shortcomings. It would also provide an opportunity to carve out the path for the next phase of development for the Organization. As our Organization, follows, the practice of holding the Annual Session, on a rotational basis between Asia and Africa, for 2011, it would be the turn of an Asian Member State. In view of the historical significance of that Session, I call upon for an early offer in this regard by an Asian Member State, so as to ensure proper planning and smooth coordination for organizing this commemorative Annual Session in view of its great importance and significance for the institutional development of AALCO.

III. ROAD MAP FOR THE FUTURE

A. Capacity-Building Programmes

46. I wish to initiate a process in which the Secretariat of the AALCO in cooperation with the Inter-governmental Organizations having Cooperation Agreements/Memorandum of Understanding to conduct regular capacity-building programmes, particularly in the area of international law-making and diplomacy. In the contemporary world, a lot of international law-making is taking place in various inter-governmental bodies. It is essential that Asian-African perspectives are adequately reflected in this process. To achieve this, it is essential to come out with regular capacity-building programmes in which young officials from our Membership countries are rendered an opportunity to sharpen their understanding of international law as well as an occasion to improvise upon their skills of Conference Diplomacy. Such programmes could be undertaken either at the seat of AALCO in New Delhi or in collaboration with any Member State in its capital.

47. Another proposal that I would like to place for consideration of the Member States is regarding institution of a fellowship for providing financial assistance to young officials of AALCO Member States to participate in the "International Law Seminar", convened by the United Nations Offices in Geneva during the Annual Session of the International Law Commission. Member States may also consider sending law students to the Offices of the Permanent Observer Missions maintained by AALCO at the United Nations Offices in New York, Geneva and Vienna as Interns. This would give them an opportunity for closely observing the work of United Nations and its various agencies. Such interns can also render valuable assistance to the ILC Members from our two regions in their work at the International Law Commission in Geneva.

B. The Secretariat

48. The Secretariat plays a crucial role in strengthening the work of the Organization. Presently, the Secretariat functions under severe constraints of time and resources. Yet the final products bear no witness to these handicaps and measure up to the quality and quantity of any important international conference and their outputs held anywhere in the world. Therefore, AALCO needs to further strengthen the infrastructure and other facilities offered to the Secretariat Staff. Equally important in this regard is to provide for training opportunities for the Secretariat Staff so as to ensure that they constantly upgrade their skills and perform their assignments in a more beneficial manner to the Organization.

49. In the International Category Staff, presently, all officials are from Asian States, therefore, I would call upon the African States to second at least one senior official to the Secretariat as Deputy/Assistant Secretary-General. Likewise, I would request the Arab Member States to consider deputing one senior official to the Secretariat for managing the affairs of the Arabic Section. Furthermore, to give an international character to the Professional Category of the Secretariat Staff, I feel there is a need to ensure that the

Secretariat should be in a position to attract and retain the best talent from the two regions. This entails offering remuneration and other terms and conditions of services at par with the other Inter-governmental Organization.

C. Strengthening the Permanent Observer Missions of AALCO at the United Nations Offices

50. The Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO), was granted the status of Permanent Observer by the United Nations General Assembly in the year 1980. Subsequent to that, in order to strengthen AALCO's representation at the United Nations Permanent Observer Missions at New York and Vienna were established. A process was initiated to establish a Permanent Observer Mission in Geneva also, however, it has to be completed. These Permanent Observer Missions are headed by an eminent person as Permanent Observer of AALCO. Generally, they render their services and offer premises to the AALCO on gratis basis. It needs to be noted that the cost of running Missions at these places is very high. However, an annual grant to cover some of the operational expenses of these Permanent Observer Missions is provided by the AALCO Secretariat.

51. Therefore, after assuming office of the Secretary-General, I started a process to further strengthen the work of these Permanent Observer Missions of AALCO, at the United Nations Offices in New York, Geneva and Vienna.

52. As regards, the New York Office, Mr. K. Bhagwat Singh, a retired United Nations Official had been the Permanent Observer of AALCO at the UN Headquarters in New York since 1986. His contributions towards raising the stature and profile of the AALCO at the United Nations have been very significant, particularly in organizing the Annual Meeting of Legal Advisers of AALCO Member States, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly Session as well as in the biennial consideration by the UN General Assembly of the item on "Cooperation between the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization and the United Nations". However, in recent times he had been keeping indifferent health and was unable to devote sufficient energy and time to attend the work of the Permanent Observer Mission of AALCO. In view of this, several Member States of AALCO, had informally suggested to me to find an equally eminent person to replace Mr. Bhagwat Singh. Therefore, the services of Mr. Bhagwat Singh were discontinued with effect from 30 June 2009.

53. After holding informal consultations, with several Heads of Delegations of AALCO Member States, I decided to appoint Dr. Roy S. Lee as Interim Permanent Observer of AALCO, with effect from 1 July 2009. Dr. Lee, a Chinese national is a retired senior official of the United Nations. He is a distinguished international lawyer and it is expected that he would be able to further strengthen the work of the Permanent Observer Mission of AALCO at the United Nations. Dr. Lee has offered to render his services as well as premises to AALCO on gratis basis. I request the Member States to kindly endorse the appointment of Dr. Roy S. Lee as the Permanent Observer of AALCO to the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

54. Similarly to strengthen the Permanent Observer Mission of AALCO at UN Offices in Geneva, as well as to develop more concrete relationship with other Inter-governmental Organizations, such as the World Trade Organization, consultations on mutually acceptable terms and conditions are in progress for appointing Prof. Georges Abi-Saab, an eminent Egyptian International Lawyer as the Interim Permanent Observer of AALCO at the UN Offices in Geneva. Accordingly, I would inform the Member States at the Annual Session and would request the Member States to kindly endorse his appointment as Permanent Observer of AALCO to the United Nations Offices in Geneva.

55. Concerning the Permanent Observer Mission of AALCO to the United Nations Offices in Vienna and UNIDO, I propose to continue working with the existing Permanent Observer Mrs. Christine J. Nemoto.

56. In future, the possibility of establishing a Permanent Observer Mission of AALCO at the United Nations Offices in Nairobi can also be explored.

57. It would be my endeavour to ensure a close working relationship between the AALCO Secretariat and these Permanent Observer Missions at various UN Offices. In this regard, subject to availability of financial resources, I also propose deputing Legal Officers to these Missions, particularly during the Annual Session of International Law Commission at Geneva to render assistance to Asian-African Members of the Commission, as well as during the Annual Session of UN General Assembly in New York.

IV. ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN SINCE THE FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF AALCO

58. Ever since I assumed the office of the Secretary-General of AALCO, it has been my constant endeavour to implement AALCO's Work Programme as approved at the Forty-Seventh Annual Session. Allow me to highlight briefly the description of the activities undertaken by the Secretariat until the finalization of this Report. I shall update this information when I formally place my Report at the Meeting of the Heads of the Delegations of AALCO Member States at the Forty-Eighth Session.

A. AALCO's Participation at the Sixtieth Session of the International Law Commission (31 July 2008, Geneva)

59. In fulfillment of the statutory obligation contained in Article 1 (d) of the revised Statutes of AALCO, at the Sixtieth Session of the International Law Commission (ILC), Mr. Narinder Singh, President of the Forty-Seventh Session of AALCO made the statement on 31 July 2008. I would like to thank Mr. Narinder Singh for accepting my request to represent AALCO at the ILC Session. Mr. Singh presented before the Commission the crux of the views of AALCO Member States, on some of the topics considered by the Commission that were expressed during the Forty-Seventh Annual Session of AALCO.³

60. The President informed the Commission that during the deliberations, many delegations offered elaborate comments on the work of the Commission on the following topics: Shared Natural Resources; Effects of Armed Conflicts on Treaties; Reservation to Treaties; Responsibility of International Organizations; Expulsion of Aliens; Obligation to Extradite or Prosecute (*aut dedere aut judicare*); and Most-Favoured Nation Clause. The Members of the Commission took note of the concerns of AALCO Member States with utmost interest. The presentation was followed by a detailed and enriching question-answer session.

B. Preparation of Notes and Comments on Selected Items on the Agenda of the Sixty-third Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations

61. AALCO's work programme includes rendering assistance to its Member States to equip them for effective participation in the work of the Sixth Committee and General Assembly of the United Nations. Accordingly, the Secretariat prepared Notes and Comments on Selected Items on the agenda of the Sixty-third Session of the United Nations General Assembly. The Document⁴ contained Notes and Comments on following items: Report on Matters relating to the work of the International Law Commission at its Sixtieth Session; Report on the work done by United Nations Commission on International Trade Law at its Forty-First Session; Oceans and the Law of the Sea; Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism; The Rule of Law at

³ The text of the Statement was circulated to the Liaison Officers of Member States at the 297th Meeting of the Liaison Officers, held on 17 September 2008, at the headquarters of the Organization in New Delhi.

⁴ AALCO/NOTES&COMMENTS/UNGA/63/2008.

International and National Levels; International Criminal Court: Recent Developments; International Humanitarian Law: Recent Developments; Sustainable Development: Protection of Global Climate for Present and Future Generations of Mankind; and Necessity of Ending Economic, Commercial and Financial Embargo by the United States of America against Cuba. This document was circulated in the digital format to the Diplomatic Missions of AALCO Member States, in New Delhi, as well as to the Permanent Missions in New York. It was also placed for consideration at AALCO's Legal Advisers Meeting, in New York, on 24 October 2008.

C. Reactivation of Advisory Panel of Liaison Officers of AALCO Member States

62. Another important development, since I assumed the Office as Secretary-General was the reactivation of the Advisory Panel⁵ of Liaison Officers of AALCO Member States. From the historical facts relating to the Organization, it could be ascertained that the nomenclature used for Advisory Panel had on previous occasions been, Administrative Panel, Advisory Panel, Special Committee of Liaison Officers, or Informal Committee of Liaison Officers depending upon the task entrusted to any particular body. The Forty-Seventh Session decided that, "the Secretary-General requests Member States to consider the proposal of the Secretariat to revise the scale of annual contributions and constitute a 'Committee of Member States' to study this issue in-depth and submit their report and Recommendations for the consideration at the Forty-Eighth Session". The Secretary-General was also "directed to consult Member States to formulate necessary measures against Member States who are in arrears, before the Forty-Eighth Session"⁶. Accordingly the Advisory Panel was established. It was specifically entrusted with the task of looking into the (i) problem of arrears; (ii) formulation of necessary measures against countries in arrears; and (iii) revision of the scale of annual contributions from member States.

63. The Advisory Panel elected Mr. Shah Asif Rahman from Bangladesh as its Chairperson, Mr. Mathain Ring Acier Akol from the Republic of Sudan as Vice-Chairperson and Mr. Amjad Q. Agha from Syrian Arab Republic as its Rapporteur. It adopted its own Rules of Procedure.⁷ So far it has held four meetings, respectively, on 13 October 2008; 20 November 2008; 28 January 2009; and 31 March 2009. The final recommendations of the Advisory Panel would be placed by the Chairperson or a representative from his country for consideration in the forthcoming Forty-Eighth Annual Session.

⁵ Chapter XI, of the "Administrative, Financial and Staff Regulations of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee" (the AALCC was renamed AALCO in 2000), refers to "Advisory Panel" and states that "The Secretary-General shall request the Liaison Officers for the constitution of an Advisory Panel of Liaison Officers to advise him generally or on any specific issue or matter relating to these regulations".

⁶ AALCO's Draft Budget for the Year 2009-RES/47/ORG 2.

⁷ AD. PANEL/ROP/DOC.3/13.10.08

D. Meeting of Legal Advisers' of AALCO Member States and Joint AALCO-ILC Meetings (24 October 2008, UN Headquarters, New York)

64. The Meeting of Legal Advisers of AALCO Member States and Joint AALCO-ILC Meeting took place at the United Nations Headquarters, in New York, on Friday 24 October 2008.⁸ Legal Advisers from 48 States were represented at the Meeting, out of which 34 were from AALCO Member States⁹ and 14 from Non-Member States.¹⁰ Dr. (Mrs.) Neeru Chadha (India), on behalf of the President of the Forty-Seventh Session of AALCO, Mr. Narinder Singh, chaired the meeting. It was also attended and addressed by Mr. Scott Sheeran (New Zealand), Vice-Chairman of the Sixth Committee; Judge Rosalyn Higgins (United Kingdom), President of the International Court of Justice; Ms. Patricia O' Brien (Ireland), Under Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and the United Nations Legal Counsel. The Permanent Representative of Sudan to the United Nations; Legal Advisers of the People's Republic of China, Republic of Korea, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kenya, Syrian Arab Republic, Republic of South Africa, Nigeria and Yemen, participated in the deliberations that ensued. The Joint AALCO-ILC Meeting was addressed by Amb. Dr. A. Rohan Perera (Sri Lanka) and Amb. Chusei Yamada (Japan), both Members of the International Law Commission.

E. Extraordinary Session of AALCO (1 December 2008, Headquarters, New Delhi)

65. In view of the severe financial crisis faced by the AALCO, Mr. Narinder Singh, the President of the Forty-Seventh Session of AALCO, convened an "Extraordinary Session of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization", on 1 December 2008 at the Headquarters in New Delhi. The Extraordinary Session was attended by representatives from 24 Member States and adopted a Resolution on AALCO's Financial Matters and Budget for the Year 2009. It *inter alia* expressed deep concern on the financial crisis faced by AALCO and in this regard emphasized and noted that the budget and the scale of assessment of contributions from Member States has not been revised for the past 15 years. The resolution realizes the need to adopt an appropriate scale of contribution and revising the same periodically at par with the practice of other International Organizations. Amongst other things, the Extraordinary Session approved

⁸ The Verbatim Record of "The Meeting of Legal Advisers of AALCO Member States & AALCO-ILC Joint Meeting", held on 24 October 2008 in New York is contained in AALCO Doc. AALCO/LAM/VR/NY/2008 and was placed in the digital format for the consideration of Member States on 22 April 2009. It is also available on the website of the Organization: <http://www.aalco.int>.

⁹ Legal Advisers of the following 34 AALCO Member States participated in the Meeting: Bahrain, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, People's Republic of China, Cyprus, Arab Republic of Egypt, Ghana, India, Republic of Indonesia, Iraq, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Kenya, Kuwait, Malaysia, Mauritius, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Somalia, Republic of South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, and Republic of Yemen.

¹⁰ Legal Advisers of the following 14 Non-Member States were represented at the meeting: Austria, Bhutan, Greece, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar, Morocco, New Zealand, Philippines, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Togo, United States of America, Vietnam and Zambia.

of the Budget for the year 2009. It urged upon the Member States to make payment of their annual contributions for the year 2009 at the earliest. It also urged the Member States to make voluntary contributions in order to improve the financial situation of AALCO. It strongly urged those Member States who are in arrears to fulfill their financial obligations and to expeditiously clear the same. It directed the Secretary-General in consultation with Member States to formulate necessary measures to be taken against those Member States who are in arrears, and circulate it before the Forty-Eighth Session for their attention, consideration and follow-up. It also mandated the Secretary-General in consultation with the Advisory Panel of Liaison Officers to expeditiously finalize the revised scale of contribution by the Member States of AALCO and present the same at the Forty-Eighth Session. It also mandated the Secretary-General to implement the Action Plan, dealing *inter alia* with plans to collect arrears and reform the AALCO's financial management system.

F. Seminar to commemorate the Sixty Years of the International Law Commission (2 December 2008, Headquarters, New Delhi)

66. A half-day Commemorative Seminar on the Sixty Years of the International Law Commission (ILC) in conjunction with the Extraordinary Session of the AALCO took place at the Permanent Headquarters Building, in New Delhi, on 2 December 2008.¹¹ Mr. Narinder Singh and Amb. Rohan Perera, both Members of ILC, spoke on the theme of "Role of the International Law Commission in the Twenty-First Century". Prof. Djamchid Momtaz, former President, ILC and I made presentations on "Strengthening Asian-African Solidarity in the ILC and Ensuring Adequate Reflection of Asian-African concerns in its work". A lively debate followed the presentations, in which the delegations from the People's Republic of China, India, Uganda and Ghana participated. The proceedings concluded with the adoption of a message by AALCO to the ILC on its Sixtieth Anniversary.

G. Seminar on the International Criminal Court: Emerging Issues and Future Challenges (18 March 2009, Headquarters, New Delhi)

67. A one day Seminar on the topic "International Criminal Court: Emerging Issues and Future Challenges" was held on, 18 March 2009, in New Delhi. This Seminar was jointly organized by AALCO and the Government of Japan. In terms of participation nearly 100 delegates attended the seminar, 19 Member States of AALCO, 20 Non-Member States, 3 International Organizations and other participants including academia from Jawaharlal Nehru University and Delhi University.

68. During the Inaugural Session, in my welcome address, I had noted that the Organization has been closely monitoring the developments of the International Criminal Court and its related issues since its Thirty-Fifth Session held at the Manila (Philippines)

¹¹ The Verbatim Record of "The Commemorative Seminar on the Sixty Years of the International Law Commission", held on 2nd December 2008 in Headquarters, New Delhi is contained in AALCO Doc. AALCO/EGM/VR/ILC/2 DECEMBER 2008 and was placed in the digital format for the consideration of Member States on 22 April 2009.

in 1996. H. E. Mr. Hideaki Domichi, Ambassador of Japan in New Delhi presented his introductory remarks on the topic. This was followed by an Inaugural Address by Hon'ble Ms. Fumiko Saiga, Judge, International Criminal Court, on the topic "The ICC Today: Activities and Challenges". Thereafter, the keynote address was delivered by H. E. Mr. Ichiro Komatsu, Ambassador of Japan to Switzerland and former Director-General of Bureau of Treaties and International Law on the topic "Japan's Accession to the ICC".

69. Two Working Sessions on the themes: "Progressive Development of International Criminal Jurisprudence: An Overview" and "ICC: Current Developments and Contemporary Challenges" also took place, in which distinguished subject experts, namely, Professor V.S. Mani, Director, School of Law and Governance, Jaipur National University; Mr. Christopher Harland, Regional Legal Adviser, ICRC; myself; and Mr. Y.S.R. Murthy, Director, National Human Rights Commission made presentations. As a discussant, Mr. C. Jayaraj, Advocate, Supreme Court of India reflected upon some of the presentations.

H. AALCO's Representation in International Meetings

1. Secretary-General's Participation at the Third World Summit of Prosecutor's General, Attorneys-General, and Chief Prosecutors (23-25 March 2009, Bucharest, Romania)

70. I attended the Third World Summit of Prosecutor's General, Attorneys-General, and Chief Prosecutors at Bucharest, Romania from 23 to 25 March 2009. I delivered a statement on 25 March 2009 on the theme: *Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO): An Avenue for enhancing cooperation and capacity-building for ensuring criminal justice in the Asian-African region*. In my address, I gave a brief outline on the origin and development of AALCO and the objectives of the Organization. I also explained the activities of the organization and the different topics on the AALCO's agenda, particularly, Legal Protection of Migrant Workers; Establishing Cooperation Against Trafficking in Women and Children; and An Effective International Legal Instrument Against Corruption, include the element of criminal justice, and the organization is engaged in enhancing international cooperation and capacity-building on these items. My participation was very fruitful in meeting esteemed group of legal luminaries and ensuing future cooperation with them. I could also highlight the AALCO's role in enhancing cooperation in the criminal justice matters.

2. Address by Secretary-General at the Conference on the Review of the Effective Legal and Judicial Measures taken Regarding War Crimes and Crimes of Genocide in Gaza (21-23 April 2009, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran)

71. A Conference on the Review of the *Effective Legal and Judicial Measures taken Regarding War Crimes and Crimes of Genocide in Gaza*, was organized by the Islamic Republic of Iran from 21 to 23 April 2009, in Tehran. I attended and delivered a statement in the Conference which highlighted the significance of the topic *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 Conventions of 1949 on the AALCO's agenda. The topic was taken up, at the initiative of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran at the AALCO's Twenty-Seventh Session which was held in Singapore (1988). I informed that AALCO, as an inter-governmental organization, would continue its effort to consolidate the views of Member States to create legal support for Palestinian right to self determination. It would continue to serve as a forum to discuss and deliberate upon the legal measures needed to protect the Palestinian rights, as well as make every effort to promote Asian-African solidarity on this very crucial issue.

I. AALCO Secretariat's participation in Meetings held in India

1. Participation of AALCO Secretariat in the National Round of Eighth Henry Dunant Memorial Moot Court Competition (11-14 September 2008, New Delhi)

72. I was invited to adjudge the finals of the Eighth National Round of the Henry Dunant Memorial Moot Court Competition organized by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Indian Society of International Law (ISIL) at ISIL premises on 14 September 2008. Members of the legal staff, namely Mrs. Anuradha Bakshi, Assistant Principal Legal Officer; Senior Legal Officers Mr. Shikhar Ranjan and Mr. Rajesh Babu were also requested to judge the preliminary rounds of the Moot Court Competition.

2. Address by Secretary-General at the International Conference on Institutional Arbitration Infrastructure and Construction (16 October 2008, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi)

73. An International Conference on Institutional Arbitration Infrastructure and Construction was organized by the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) and Construction Industry Arbitration Council (CIAC), at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. The Hon'ble Justice K.G. Balakrishnan, Chief Justice of India inaugurated the Conference and delivered the Inaugural Address. I also made a statement at the Inaugural Session of the Conference on 16 October 2008. In my statement, I observed that, in today's world, arbitration, was the most effective and widely used tools for settling commercial and trade disputes in a peaceful and effective manner. I gave a brief outline on the AALCO's contribution in this field. I explained that outside the United Nations framework, AALCO was among the first to realize the potential of Arbitration and its importance to the Asian-African states. AALCO realized the need to develop and improve the procedure for international commercial arbitration, the necessity for institutional support, develop necessary expertise and create environment conducive to conduct arbitration in the Asian and African regions. Accordingly, the Organization envisaged a system where the disputes arising out of commercial transactions could be settled under fair, inexpensive and adequate procedures, and to establish regional arbitration centres under the auspices of AALCO in different locations in the Asian-African region which could fill the existing gap for such machinery. I informed the august gathering that four such centres were functional at

Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), Lagos (Nigeria), Cairo (Arab Republic of Egypt) and Tehran (Islamic Republic of Iran). The fifth such centre would be soon operational in Nairobi (Republic of Kenya).

3. Inaugural Address by the Secretary-General at the Fourth South Asia Henry Dunant Memorial Moot Court Competition (17 October 2008, New Delhi, India)

74. The Fourth South Asia Henry Dunant Memorial Moot Court Competition was jointly organized by the Indian Society of International Law and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), on 17 October 2008. Teams from Nepal, Pakistan, Iran, Bangladesh, Sri-Lanka and India participated in the competition. Amongst others Prof. Rahmatullah Khan, Secretary General of the ISIL; and Mr. Francois Stamm, Regional Delegate of ICRC at New Delhi also attended the inaugural session. In my inaugural address, I congratulated the ISIL and the ICRC for organizing this moot court competition in the memory of Henry Dunant and for the promotion of International Humanitarian Law. I observed that the moot court competition, which seeks to promote international humanitarian law amongst law students, was a real tribute to the memory of Henry Dunant for his concern for upholding humanitarian values and his role in establishing the Red Cross movement.

4. AALCO Secretariat's participation in the Golden Jubilee International Conference of the Indian Society of International Law (1-4 February 2009, New Delhi, India)

75. The Golden Jubilee International Conference was organized by the Indian Society of International Law (ISIL) from 1 to 4 February 2009. I would like to inform that I had the privilege to share the dais during its Inaugural Session with Hon'ble Vice President of India, H. E. Mr. Mohammad Hamid Ansari. Mr. Ansari had inaugurated the Conference on 1 February 2009, at Vigyan Bhawan, in New Delhi. The Conference was attended by many distinguished legal luminaries of the international law fraternity across the world, including Prof. Richard Falk, United Nations Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories; Prof. Georges Abi-Saab and several other leading international law scholars from across the globe. From AALCO Secretariat, apart from me, Deputy Secretaries-General Dr. Xu Jie, Amb. Tabatabaei Shafiei and Dr. Yuchiei Inouye; along with Legal Staff, attended the conference. Many issues of significant importance to developing countries were discussed followed by in-depth discussions.

J. Publications

1. Yearbook of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization

76. The annual report of the Organization entitled *Yearbook of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization*, which is being published by the Secretariat since 2003 is in the sixth year of publication. The Book provides in comprehensive manner information about AALCO, Secretariat Studies prepared on the agenda items, Summary

of deliberations and the Resolution adopted at the Annual Session. In addition, it contains statements delivered by the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretaries-General. It has been well received by the Member States, international organizations, and in academic circles. It would be my pleasure to place for the consideration of the Member States volume VI for the year 2008 of the Yearbook at the forthcoming Session of the Organization.

2. AALCO Quarterly Bulletin

77. An important initiative commenced in the year 2005 was the re-launch of AALCO Quarterly Bulletin. It is a completely restructured and revitalized version of the earlier AALCO Bulletin published as Quarterly and later biannually by the Secretariat. The present *AALCO Quarterly Bulletin* contains well-researched articles on international law; write-ups on selected current developments; and select documents of relevance to the Asian-African states. The Secretariat welcomes well researched articles from authors. A useful way for this could be by providing to the Secretariat articles from eminent international law scholars for publication in the Quarterly Bulletin.

3. Newsletter of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization

78. In order to cover the entire gamut of diversified activities of AALCO and to reflect upon the growing stature of the Organization, the Secretariat has been bringing out “*Newsletter of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization*” since September 2004.

4. Book on Contemporary Issues in International Law

79. The AALCO Secretariat plans to bring out a book on Contemporary Issues in International Law, consisting of articles of the International Category Officers and Legal Staff of the Organization. The topics chosen for the articles are of contemporary relevance and related to the AALCO’s agenda items. The book would be released during the Forty-Eighth Session of AALCO.

5. Official Documents of AALCO

80. The Report of the Forty-Seventh Session has been placed for the consideration of Member States.¹² While the Verbatim Record of Discussions of Forty-Seventh Session are being prepared by the Secretariat and taking advantage of information technology, the Secretariat plans to disseminate it to the Member States, in digital format in compact discs. This would lead to monetary saving also. In addition, the Secretariat has also brought out the Verbatim Records of the Meeting of Legal Advisers of AALCO Member States and AALCO-ILC Joint Meeting,¹³ held in New York on 24 October 2008 and placed before the Member States in electronic version. The Secretariat is also in the

¹² AALCO/47/NEW DELHI (HQ) / 2008/REP.

¹³ AALCO/LAM/VR/NY/2008.

process of bringing out the “Report of the One-day Seminar on “International Criminal Court: Emerging Issues and Future Challenges”, held at New Delhi on 18 March 2009.

K. Report on Matters Relating to the AALCO’s Permanent Headquarters Building

81. It may be recalled that during the Forty-Fifth Golden Jubilee Session of AALCO, held in New Delhi 2006, the new Permanent Headquarters Building of the AALCO was inaugurated by Hon’ble Mr. Anand Sharma, Minister of State for External Affairs, Government of India on 6 April 2006. The new Headquarters Building, comprising the Secretariat, (with a well-equipped auditorium) and Secretary-General’s residence is a proper office and residential complex. However, I would like to bring to the notice of the Member States that maintenance, both electrical and civil, requires large sum of money and the Secretariat is finding difficult to meet such expenses from the regular budget of the Organization. The Secretariat has taken over the maintenance (electrical) of the building from the Central Public Works Department (CPWD), with effect from April 2009. I also take this opportunity to reiterate my request to Member States to provide their National Flags to the Secretariat for displaying them in the Permanent Headquarters. May I also suggest to Member States to present to the Secretariat an item representative of their national culture and heritage for display in the new building.

L. The Secretariat

82. Apart from the Secretary-General (Malaysia), three Member Governments, namely, the People’s Republic of China, Islamic Republic of Iran and Japan have offered assistance to AALCO by deputing their senior officials to the Secretariat on secondment. Deputy Secretaries-General; Dr. Xu Jie (People’s Republic of China), Amb. Mr. Reza Tabatabaei Shafiei (Islamic Republic of Iran), and Dr. Yuichi Inouye (Japan) have been rendering exemplary services to the Secretariat. I wish to place on record my gratitude to these Member Governments for rendering such valuable assistance, and also wish to express my deep appreciation for the dedicated services of these officials deputed to the AALCO.

83. The number of the locally recruited staff in the Secretariat is 20. The Legal Staff comprises one Assistant Principal Legal Officer, three Senior Legal Officers, and four Legal Officers. One Senior Legal Officer and one Legal Officer are currently on sabbatical. In addition, there is a Librarian in the Professional category. The remaining staff are in the administrative and supporting category.

84. It has been my constant endeavor to encourage the legal staff at the Secretariat to upgrade their skills and widen their knowledge base in international law by participating in various seminars and conferences on International Law, both in India and abroad. In pursuance of this objective, I had sent Mr. Shikhar Ranjan, Senior Legal Officer, to participate in the Advanced Workshop on International Humanitarian Law organized jointly by the Regional Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), New Delhi and NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad from 21 to 22 March

2009. I had also sent Mr. Mohammed Hussain K.S., Senior Legal Officer, to attend the Fourteenth South Asia Teaching Session on International Humanitarian Law organized by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) at the NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad from 22 to 29 April 2009. On my part, I constantly encourage and motivate the Legal Staff to apply for International Training Programmes.

M. Report on the Functioning of the Centre for Research and Training

85. The “Data Collection Unit”, which had been set up in the Secretariat in 1992, was renamed as the “Centre for Research and Training” following a decision taken at AALCO’s Fortieth Session in 2001. The Centre has been engaged in activities to strengthen its research programme and disseminate information on AALCO, *inter alia*, by organizing training programmes/seminars for Member States officials, bringing out special studies on the issues of international law of common concern, strengthening its website and electronic communication facilities. AALCO’s website is being constantly updated. I am happy to inform you that in the last November 2008, the CRT had organized its First Training Programme, namely, the “General Course on International Law” at the Headquarters Building, in New Delhi, India. 15 participants from 11 Member States had benefited from the programme. In my tenure, I would certainly take all the efforts to continue the training programme, one of the important capacity building activities of the AALCO.

86. The activities of the CRT need to be further strengthened and in this regard, I propose that Member States may consider providing voluntary contributions, in addition to the regular annual contribution for steering its activities. Such contributions would be earmarked in a separate fund and utilized only for the work of CRT.

N. Budget and Finance

1. AALCO’s Draft Budget for the year 2010

87. It may be recalled that at the Extraordinary session of AALCO, held at Headquarters, New Delhi on 1 December 2008, it was decided to place the proposed budget for the year 2010 at the Liaison Officer’s meeting and once adopted there it shall be placed before the plenary of the Forty-Eighth Session of the AALCO for approval. Based upon this decision taken by the Heads of Delegations during the Extraordinary Session and in compliance with Rule 24(3) of the Statutory Rules of the Organization, the draft budget for the fiscal year 2010 has been prepared. It had been placed before the 300th Liaison Officer’s Meeting held on 29 May 2009, and once again before the 301st Liaison Officer’s Meeting which was held on 17 June 2009. Few adjustments have been proposed under certain heads and sub-heads. No Budget provision has been kept for capital expenditures, presuming that AALCO being fully furnished, would not incur any expenses under that budget head. I sincerely hope that the proposal for the revised scale of contributions would be adopted at this Session and AALCO would be able to conduct its daily activities with enhanced research capacities facilitating its Member States more

functionally and effectively. Hence, we could meet our minimal budget expenses. I hope that this modest budget would be approved at the Forty-Eighth Session of the AALCO.

2. Position of Arrears of Contribution

88. The Secretariat is in a difficult financial situation, which is mainly due to the accumulated arrears of contributions payable by Member States. I am sorry to state that some Member States are in arrears for more than 20 years. During the Extraordinary Session, the President of AALCO and I had affirmatively brought to the attention of our Member States, the status of massive accumulation of arrears. In furtherance of the Action Plan adopted by the Extraordinary Session, the Secretariat has taken follow up measures with the concerned Member States. I sincerely appeal to the Session to adopt immediate action to the effect of collection of arrears. I take this opportunity to once again urge Member States, who are in huge arrears to start paying the amount in small installments at least and clear up their pending arrears as this will go a long way in strengthening the financial base of the Organization and help in carrying out its mandated activities which cannot materialize due to lack of funds within the Secretariat.

O. Archives

89. Keeping in view the importance of proper documentation in facilitation of an Organization's work, the Secretariat conceived and adopted an Archives Policy. The Policy was adopted, *inter alia*, to ensure greater and easier access to official documents and to prevent misplacement of the official documents, which thereby ensures improved efficiency in carrying out the work of the Organization. The Policy was aimed at consolidating and organizing the documents in a scientific and methodical way at one place according to an adopted Categorization of the "Official Archives for the AALCO Headquarters". In accordance with the adopted plan, as the work is of a continuous nature and is therefore, an on-going activity. In the new permanent headquarters building, a separate room has been designated as "Archives Section".

P. Revision of Statutory Rules of the Organization

90. It may be recalled that the Nairobi Session vide RES/44/ORG 6 adopted on 1 July 2005, had mandated the Secretary-General after due consultation with the Committee of Liaison Officers for the revision of Statutory Rules, to prepare revised draft of the Statutory Rules. After assuming office last year, I felt that there was an urgent need to update the statutory rules as there were many discrepancies relating to many procedural matters which did not have specific provisions. Therefore, I have constituted a Committee within the Secretariat to revise the Statutory Rules, and to come out with a draft. The Committee is doing a thorough Rule-by-Rule examination of the present Statutory Rules and once it completes its work the same would be submitted to the Liaison Officers Meeting before being placed for consideration at an Annual Session. I would also like to add that the Secretariat welcomes any input for the consideration by this Committee.

Q. Membership

91. 47 States are presently Members of AALCO. Alongwith my Deputies, earnest efforts are being made to enhance the membership of the Organization.

92. In relation to Membership of the Organization, I would like to invite the kind attention of Member States towards the membership of Lebanon. Although, it is the understanding of the Secretariat that Lebanon is a Member State of AALCO, a recent communication received from the Government of Lebanon states that Lebanon is not a Member State of AALCO. On a positive note, the same communication states that the Embassy of Lebanon was looking towards a future cooperation with AALCO. Accordingly, I have been working with the present Ambassador of Lebanon in New Delhi to ensure that Lebanon embraces AALCO as a Member State and I do sincerely hope that such efforts would bear positive results at the earliest.

V. STRENGTHENING THE COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED NATIONS, ITS SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

A. Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization

93. It may be recalled that the United Nations General Assembly vide its Resolution 35/2 of 13 October 1980, had requested the AALCO to participate in its sessions and work in the capacity of observer. Since then AALCO has been actively participating as an Observer in the work of the UN General Assembly.

94. Following the adoption of new pattern by the General Assembly, the item pertaining to the Cooperation between the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization and the United Nations is considered on a biennial basis. The Assembly had vide its resolution 61/5 of 20 October 2006 included the item in the provisional agenda of its Sixty-third Session and the item was considered on 3 November 2008. H.E. Mr. Narinder Singh, President of the Forty-Seventh Session of AALCO addressed the UN General Assembly on 3 November 2008. In his address, the President of AALCO, gave a brief outline on the origin and development of AALCO. He also briefed the General Assembly regarding the Forty-Sixth and Forty-Seventh Session of AALCO. He emphasized that the Cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations should seek to capitalize on the strengths of each organization and should be complementary. He observed that expanding relations between the UN and AALCO could serve that objective and contribute to the fulfillment of the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

95. The Resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 3 November 2008 entitled, “Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization”, while recognizing the continuing efforts of the AALCO towards strengthening the role and function of the United Nations and its various organs in enhancing the rule of law and wider adherence to related international instruments, recommended that with a view to promoting close interaction between the Consultative Organization and the Sixth Committee, the consideration of the sub-item entitled “Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization” should be scheduled to coincide with the deliberations of the Committee on the work of the International Law Commission.¹⁴

B. Strengthening the Cooperation with Specialized Agencies and other International Organizations

96. From the very beginning, it has been a privilege for AALCO to work in cooperation with the United Nations, its Specialized Agencies and other International Organizations. As envisaged in its Statutes, such co-operation began with the

¹⁴ A/RES/63/10

International Law Commission. Subsequently, on matters concerning Status and Treatment of Refugees, AALCO and UNHCR established close relations. With its involvement in International Trade Law matters, AALCO initiated its cooperative arrangements with UNCITRAL, UNCTAD, UNIDO and other Inter-governmental Organizations, such as the UNIDROIT and the Hague Conference on Private International Law. However, a great impetus was given to such cooperative arrangements with the according of Permanent Observer Status to AALCO by the United Nations in 1980. As a follow-up, Agreements were concluded with the United Nations, IMO, IAEA, UNIDO, UNEP, and UNITAR. AALCO also concluded similar co-operation agreements with International Organizations, which include, Council of Europe, Commonwealth Secretariat, League of Arab States and the African Union (formerly Organization of African Unity).

97. In August 2000, a Cooperation Agreement was signed between AALCO and WIPO. In 2001, Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) were signed with International Organization for Migration (IOM), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations University (UNU). In 2002, similar MOUs were concluded with the UNHCR and ICRC. The Cooperation Agreement with the ICRC entered into force in July 2003. In September 2004, administrative arrangements for cooperation between the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and AALCO were formalized. At the Nairobi Session (2005), a revised and revitalized Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was signed. In January 2008, a Memorandum of Understanding between the AALCO and the International Criminal Court (ICC) was concluded.

98. Other Organizations with which process may be initiated include the Organization for Islamic Conference (OIC), Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and other regional groupings of North and Latin American countries.

99. I wish to add that these cooperation agreements provide very useful basis for organizing joint meetings and seminars on topics of mutual interest with these Organizations. These Organizations provide funds for the participation of resource persons and experts, which enrich the deliberations in the AALCO meetings. AALCO's financial commitments are minimum. I believe this is a very practical way to enhance AALCO's activities and broaden its base of research activities.

100. In this regard, I would like to mention that a half day Special Meeting is being jointly organized with the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), the Government of Malaysia and AALCO on the "Law of the Sea" during the Forty-Eighth Annual Session. Also, talks are progressing with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to hold a three day Cross Regional Legal Training Workshop for Criminal Justice Officials to facilitate Asia-Africa Cooperation against Terrorism.

101. Another initiative that is in pipeline in this regard is a three to five day workshop on "Treaty Law and Practice" in cooperation with the Office of Legal Affairs of the

United Nations. Based upon my proposal, the Chief of the UN Treaty Section has agreed to join hands with AALCO by providing two UN Experts for the proposed Workshop that I tentatively propose would be convened in the first quarter of 2010, either in New Delhi or in the capital of the sponsoring Member State. Following finalization of organizational aspects, I would be informing the Member States the programme as well as request the esteemed Member States to nominate an official, dealing with treaty related matters, in your respective Governments for participation in this Workshop. The Secretariat is also exploring the possibility of raising funds through which some kind of assistance could be provided to the participating officials for boarding, lodging and travel expenses.

C. Signing of Memorandum of Understanding with the Xiamen Academy of International Law

102. In order to nurture relation with institutions involved in research and dissemination of international law, I have taken the initiative to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Xiamen Academy of International Law. The MOU will be signed on 6 July 2009. Xiamen Academy located in People's Republic of China is an international institution aiming to provide highest level education to individuals who are particularly sensitive to the development and use of international law, such as young lecturers in international law, diplomats, practitioners of law, government officials in charge of foreign affairs, and officials in international organizations. The mission of the Academy is to promote academic exchanges among legal communities across the globe, encourage examination of major international issues, and by so doing seek ways to improve the possibilities for world peace and international cooperation.

VI. PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE COMING YEAR

103. It was my privilege to be appointed as the Secretary-General of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization on 30 June 2008. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my gratitude to the Member States for the kind support and confidence they have reposed in me. I would do my best to keep alive the Bandung spirit of friendship, cooperation and solidarity amongst Asian-African States. As a strong votary for enhancing the participation of Afro-Asian countries in the progressive development and codification of international law, I would work strenuously to increase the influence of Asian-African States in the international legislative process.

104. The task entrusted upon me is a challenging one. It would be my constant endeavour to meet the growing expectations of the Member States and orient AALCO's activities in such a way so that it could provide more beneficial and useful services to them. Some of the steps that I propose to take in the coming year include:

A. Preparation of the Studies on the Items on the Agenda of AALCO

105. As regards, the preparation of the Studies on the Items on the Agenda of AALCO, as follow-up of the work of the International Law Commission is the statutory obligation for AALCO, the study on that topic would continue. In relation, to the other items, as I have made proposal for taking up the other 14 items currently on the agenda on "As and when required basis", work on each of these items would proceed on the basis of the mandate received from the Forty-Eighth Annual Session in this regard.

B. Preparation of Studies on Selected Items on the Agenda of the Sixty-fourth Session of the United Nations General Assembly

106. Following the established practice, with a view to assisting Member States in their participation at the Sixty-fourth Session of the General Assembly, in particular the Sixth Committee, the Secretariat would prepare studies on selected items on the agenda of the Sixty-fourth Session of the General Assembly.

C. Participation in International Meetings

107. Representation of AALCO and ILC at each other's annual session has now become a customary practice. Following that I would be attending the Sixty-second Session of the International Law Commission and would present an overview of the discussions at the Forty-Eighth Session. In addition, I would also represent the Organization at the Sixty-fourth Session of the UN General Assembly. Another meeting, which I shall be convening, would be the AALCO's Legal Advisers' and AALCO-ILC joint meeting on the sidelines of the Sixty-fourth Session of the UN General Assembly in New York in October/November 2009. Apart from the above two meetings, if funds are available, AALCO might be represented at one or two other international meetings where its participation would be useful.

D. Training Programmes

108. A new beginning was made in 2008 with the launching of a two-week “General Course in International Law”. I am thankful to all the resource persons for this programme as well as the participants for making it a highly successful programme. I am quite confident that in the coming years, the Secretariat would continue to organize such training programmes in International Law. Other initiatives that are in pipeline, include a three-five day workshop on “Treaty Law and Practice” in cooperation with the Office of the Legal Affairs of the United Nations. Our new Headquarters Building contains adequate logistic facilities for conducting good training programmes and the Secretariat continues to put in place earnest efforts, for organizing more and well-structured training programmes for the benefit of officials of its Member States.

E. Strengthening the Library

109. Library is the backbone for research activities of any Organization. Fortunately, in the new Headquarters building we have one full floor dedicated to the Library. It is equipped with adequate stacks and cupboards and work is in progress to scientifically organize, catalogue and place properly all the available resources. Subject to the availability of funds, online legal database, such as *Lexis Nexis*, *Westlaw* or *Heinonline* could be subscribed. Plans are also afoot to make a Digital Library.

F. Publications

110. Publications of an organization are its face to the outside world. In order to ensure wider and periodic dissemination about the various activities of AALCO, the Organization has re-oriented its existing publications and provided them a new and more reader friendly look, apart from enhancing the quality and content of the publication. The advantages of digital revolution have to be ushered into the AALCO’s publication policy and in this regard, I propose that most of the Secretariat publications are brought out in electronic format. Furthermore, I also plan to bring out some studies on topics of relevance to our Member States.

G. Proposals for holding Inter-sessional Meetings, Workshops and Seminars

111. The Organization has several Cooperation Agreements in place and in this regard consultations are under way with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) in New Delhi to organize an Inter-sessional Meeting on International Terrorism and with the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations on Treaty Law and Practice.

VII. CONCLUDING REMARKS

112. The peoples of Asia and Africa aspire to a world in which the values of liberty, justice and equality prevail under the rules of international law that satisfies their needs. There is a clear need to make international law more relevant to the day-to-day life of individuals as it has been with respect to States as the traditional major actors. In this endeavor the AALCO has a unique role to play as a legal body representing the Asian-African States by identifying their common interests and needs as well as by providing a common platform in the development and codification of International Law. Over the years, despite perennial financial problems, AALCO, as a dynamic institution, has succeeded in maintaining its vitality by adapting itself to the changing environment with maximum flexibility and cost-effective management. I am quite confident that with the constant support and financial backing from our Member States the Organization has much better prospects.

**PUTRAJAYA DECLARATION ON REVITALIZING AND STRENGTHENING
THE ASIAN-AFRICAN LEGAL CONSULTATIVE ORGANIZATION**

1. We, the Heads of Delegations of the Member States of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO), have assembled at the Forty-Eighth Annual Session of AALCO held in Putrajaya, Malaysia from 17-20 August 2009, reaffirm our faith in the Organization and recognize its vital contribution towards strengthening Asian-African solidarity, particularly in the progressive development and codification of international law.
2. We must act positively to shape our future, advocating a new system of international relations that is both democratic and representative of all - particularly including developing countries - based on respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the sovereign equality of nations.
3. We rededicate ourselves to support all efforts to uphold the sovereign equality of all States, respect for their territorial integrity and political independence, resolution of disputes by peaceful means and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, the right to self-determination of peoples which remain under colonial domination and foreign occupation, non-interference in the internal affairs of States, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for the equal rights of all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion and international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character.
4. We reaffirm our faith in the lasting message of the Bandung Conference (1955) of Asian-African leaders, that despite the differences in their political, economic, or legal systems, the States of Asian-African region were inextricably linked together as an Asian-African identity.
5. We recognize that in more than five decades the world has changed vastly from the days of the Bandung Conference of Asian-African leaders, yet the principles laid down by the leaders at that Conference remain valid, and the ideas, goals and vision articulated then, continue to guide our Organization.
6. We now stand on the threshold of a new era. An era that offers great opportunity yet poses special challenges for the developing world.
7. We recognize that international law is an indispensable instrument to shape a new world order. The AALCO, since its establishment, in 1956, has constructively, constantly and consistently contributed in enabling the Asian-African States in developing enlightened international legal policies and positions and play their due role in shaping a just and equitable world order.

8. We reaffirm the vital importance of an effective multilateral system, in accordance with principles of international law based on sovereign equality, territorial integrity and political independence, and AALCO's pivotal role in realizing it.
9. We emphasize the importance of fulfilling the statutory and financial obligations by all Member States of AALCO.
10. We urge the Member States in arrears to expeditiously clear their arrears in view of the financial crisis being faced by AALCO.
11. We recognize that it is the collective responsibility of all the Member States of AALCO to redeem the Organization from the present financial crisis.
12. We realize the continued ideological relevance of our Organization in the fast changing world order and to ensure that it is revitalized to serve as a centre for harmonizing the actions of Asian-African States in international law matters, and pledge ourselves to provide our Organization with the necessary financial support, thereby enabling it to more proactively contribute in realizing the objectives of the Organization in times to come.