

**III. SUMMARY RECORD OF THE INAUGURAL SESSION OF THE FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION
HELD ON MONDAY, 17TH AUGUST 2009 AT 9:00 AM**

His Excellency Mr. Narinder Singh, Joint Secretary and Legal Adviser, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India and President of the Forty-Seventh Session of AALCO in the Chair.

1. Welcome Remarks by the Honourable Tan Sri Abdul Gani Patail, the Attorney-General of Malaysia

The Honourable Dato' Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department of Malaysia,

His Excellency Mr. Narinder Singh, Joint Secretary and Legal Adviser, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India and President of the Forty-Seventh Session of AALCO

His Excellency Professor Dr. Rahmat Mohamad, the Secretary General of AALCO,

Your Excellencies, Ministers of Justice, Ministers of Law, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Attorneys General, Distinguished Delegates and Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamualaikum and Good Morning.

On behalf of the Attorney General's Chambers of Malaysia, it gives me great pleasure to bid you a very warm welcome to Malaysia and to the 48th Session of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization. The Attorney General's Chambers of Malaysia is indeed honoured to organize this Annual Session together with the AALCO Secretariat and I wish to thank Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, ladies and gentlemen, for your participation at this AALCO annual meeting. Your presence is definitely indicative of the commitment of AALCO Member States to AALCO as an organization, as the Annual Sessions are the highlights of AALCO activities. For Malaysia, we are honoured to host the Forty-Eighth Annual Session of AALCO, as part of our continued support of AALCO. I am also happy that this AALCO Session is the first international event to take place here, in our new Attorney General's Chambers building. We are indeed embarking on a memorable Session.

I would also like to take this opportunity to convey our gratitude to all Member States for their support in the election and appointment of Prof. Dr. Rahmat bin Mohamad as the Secretary General of AALCO on 30th June 2008. I personally believe that Prof. Dr. Rahmat Bin Mohamad would continue to do an excellent job in heading the Secretariat with his clear visions for AALCO as he has done during his first year in office.

This Forty-Eighth Annual Session promises to be a stimulating and productive event, with the variety of pivotal topics to be discussed. In addition to the traditional AALCO issues, new topics have been introduced in this Session in light of recent developments in international law and international affairs. Among others, Malaysia has jointly organized 2 Special Meetings; the first is to discuss "*Transnational Migration - Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants*" organized with AALCO and the second Special Meeting is on the

issue of “*Law of the Sea*”, particularly on “*Delimitation of Maritime Boundary*,” and “*Maritime Security and Piracy*”, which is jointly organized with AALCO and ITLOS. As these issues are of great concern to Asian and African countries in particular, and the world as a whole, the discussion on these topics in AALCO is indeed timely, if not overdue. I also note that a “Thematic Debate on Strengthening and Revitalizing AALCO” has been scheduled in this AALCO Annual Session to discuss pressing issues relating to various aspects of our Organization, in order to further strengthen AALCO’s institution and its position as an international organization.

Once again, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, ladies and gentlemen for your presence at this Annual Session. In addition I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the Honourable Dato’ Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz, Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department of Malaysia, for his gracious presence at this morning’s opening ceremony, and to the Government of Malaysia for its support in this event. To the AALCO Secretariat and the organizing committee, we thank you for your tireless efforts to ensure the smooth running of this Session. As the host, I hope that the arrangements made are to your satisfaction, and that Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, ladies and gentlemen have an enjoyable stay during this Forty-Eighth Annual Session of AALCO in Putrajaya, Malaysia.

In conclusion, I wish all of you a productive session and I certainly look forward to being part of the engaging days to come. Thank you.

2. Welcome Address by His Excellency Prof. Rahmat Bin Mohamad, Secretary-General, Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization

Selamat Pagi (Good Morning)

Your Excellency The Honourable Dato’ Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz, Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department of Malaysia,

Your Excellency Mr. Narinder Singh, Joint Secretary and Legal Adviser, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India and President of the Forty-Seventh Session of AALCO,

Your Excellency Mr. J. T. Radebe, Hon’ble Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development, Republic of South Africa and President of the Forty-Sixth Session of AALCO,

Your Excellency Tan Sri Abdul Gani Patail, the Attorney-General of Malaysia and in-coming President of the AALCO,

Hon’ble Ministers, Attornies-General,

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my privilege and honour to welcome this distinguished gathering to the Forty-Eighth Annual Session of the AALCO.

We are particularly privileged that Right Honourable Tan Sri Dato’ Haji Muhyiddin bin Mohd. Yassin, Minister in the office of the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia has kindly consented to deliver the Inaugural Address and declare open our Annual Session. On behalf of the Organization and my own behalf, I respectfully and warmly welcome Your Excellency

and it is our privilege and honour to have your august presence amongst us today. We also take pride in the fact the Forty-Eighth Annual Session of the AALCO is being inaugurated by one of the highly respected and eminent leaders from the Asian-African region. We are confident, with Your Excellency setting the tone for our deliberations; the Forty-Eighth Annual Session of the AALCO is going to be a great success.

Your Excellency, I would like to express on behalf of the Organization and its Member States our profound gratitude to Your Excellency, to the Government and people of Malaysia for hosting the Forty-Eighth Annual Session of AALCO in the new administrative capital of Malaysia - Putrajaya - a modern garden city with sophisticated information network based on multimedia technologies.

Malaysia represents a unique culture, which is built on the acceptance and absorption of new and varied cultures. The hall mark of this is the synthesis of traditional societies and culture with modern values. Malaysia has made significant contribution to the development of AALCO, ever since it's joining the Organization in 1970. It has always been in the forefront of deliberations within the AALCO and its voice is considered to be representative of the concerns of third world countries. As a Malaysian national, it is my proud privilege and honour to serve the AALCO as its Chief Executive.

This is the second time we are assembled in Malaysia for an AALCO Annual Session. Last time the Organization met for its Seventeenth Session in 1976. In 2006, Malaysia hosted the very successful "Meeting of International Experts on Human Rights in Islam (MIEHRI). That meeting was jointly organized by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the AALCO Secretariat.

Under the auspices of AALCO, presently, five Regional Arbitration Centres, are functional in the Asian and African continents. The first such centre in Asia- the Kuala Lumpur Regional Centre for Arbitration (KLCRA) was established in the year 1978 with the encouragement, financial and technical support of the Government of Malaysia. In three decades of its functioning, the KLCRA has acquired the reputation of being one of the finest international arbitration institutions in the Asia-Pacific region.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, the founding fathers of our Organization had realized that there was a need for unity of common interests of the peoples of Asia and Africa that called for Asian-African cooperation. Following the Bandung Summit of Asian-African leaders, in 1956, they created the AALCO as a forum for collaboration for Asian-African States in their common pursuit of enhancing legal co-operation, particularly in international law matters. The objective was to ensure that each one of our countries was given the type of assistance and encouragement in the development of choosing international law perspectives, as well as positions.

In its journey of fifty three years, the AALCO has ensured that the voice of Asia and Africa resounds in international law-making, the domain long considered to be traditionally the exclusive preserve of Western powers. This should come as no surprise. A world striving to foster a stable and harmonious environment simply cannot afford to ignore the aspirations and needs of an overwhelming majority of its members, which occupies more than half of the land surface giving shelter to 70% of the population, seeking to uphold its legitimate interests. Thus, from a humble beginning of just seven States, the AALCO today comprises of 47 States, which in itself is a testimony to its importance.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, however, one cannot ignore the stark reality that the changing dimensions of international law making in the contemporary world has made it into a highly technical and highly difficult area, often compartmentalized into several specific legal regimes. This calls for the availability of a strong, professional, technically equipped cadre of international legal professionals in our countries. However, such organized agencies are still elusive to most of the developing countries. It needs to be noted that such agencies are so well employed by the most developed countries to their best advantage as a tool to legitimize their actions.

Our Organization is continuously engaged in the pursuance of this objective. Our Heads of Delegations, later in the day today, would engage in a thematic debate entitled "Strengthening and Revitalizing the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization." I am quite hopeful that the outcome of the debate would lay down the path on which the AALCO would tread in future. I am also quite confident that the Member States would take all necessary measures to bestow their Organization with adequate human and material resources for AALCO- the agency for bringing together the Asian-African States in harmonizing the international legal order in the post Westphalian era.

Excellencies, distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, over the course of the coming four-days, we would be deliberating upon some of the highly pertinent international legal issues of contemporary relevance that form part of our substantive agenda. We would be focusing upon the work of the International Law Commission at its Sixtieth Session, the 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 the WTO as a Framework Agreement and Code of Conduct for the World Trade.

The current global financial crisis affects us all. Experts from some of our Member States would share with us their experiences in managing the global financial crisis.

In two special half-day meetings, on 19th August, we would be focusing upon "Transnational Migration- Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants" and the "Law of the Sea". Suffice, it to mention here that both these topics are of great importance for our Member States. I am grateful for all Panellists for agreeing to enrich us on these crucial issues, in the coming days. I would also like to thank the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea for collaborating with us for organizing the Special Meeting on the Law of the Sea.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, I have also the honour of informing this august assembly that during the course of the Session, three publications brought out by the Secretariat, namely, AALCO Yearbook 2008; Report on the Seminar on "The International Criminal Court: Emerging Issues and Future Challenges" and the "Essays in Contemporary Issues of International Law" will be released.

I request the delegates to avail this unique opportunity and reflect the concern of their Governments/countries regarding these topics and to share their experiences with and among AALCO Member States as it is in my view one of the fundamental aims of our annual meeting. The AALCO Secretariat has done its utmost to make all the necessary arrangements for the success of our Forty-Eighth Annual Session. Pardon us, if there is any shortcoming in the arrangements of this Session from our part.

I am quite confident we would be able to achieve amicably, in the spirit of reconciliation, friendship, and mutual trust, the objectives of this Forty-Eighth Annual Session of AALCO.

I once again welcome you all to the Forty-Eighth Annual Session of AALCO and to Putrajaya. Putrajaya in Sanskrit means "victorious son". I am very hopeful that all the delegates attending this Session would return to their respective capitals with a sense of victory. A victory for their dedication towards the Asian-African cause and for strengthening and revitalizing the AALCO- the embodiment of Asian-African solidarity in universalizing international law. Thank you very much.

3. Address by His Excellency Mr. Narinder Singh, Joint Secretary and Legal Adviser, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India and President of the Forty-Seventh Session of AALCO

His Excellency the Honourable Dato' Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Of Malaysia

His Excellency Tan Sri Abdul Gani Patail, Attorney General of Malaysia,

His Excellency Prof. Dr. Rahmat bin Mohamad, Secretary-General of AALCO,

President of the Forty-Sixth Session of AALCO,

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

At the outset, let me express my profound gratitude to all the Member States, the Secretary-General and the Secretariat of AALCO for extending all necessary support and assistance to me in discharging my duties as the President of the Forty-Seventh Session of AALCO. I also express my sincere appreciation to the Government of Malaysia for the warm hospitality and making all arrangements for the smooth conduct of the Forty-Eighth Annual Session of AALCO in this beautiful city of Putrajaya.

I am confident that the Forty-Eighth Annual Session would be a highly successful one. Apart from the items on our regular agenda, namely, Work of the International Law Commission; the International Criminal Court: Recent Developments; WTO as a Framework Agreement and Code of Conduct for the World Trade; and Deportation of Palestinians, two half-day special meetings on *Transnational Migration-Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants* and the *Law of the Sea* are also organized. Viewing from an organizational perspective, the half day thematic debate on *Strengthening and Revitalizing the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization* is very significant and I hope Member States will adopt concrete measures towards the realization of the objectives that this thematic debate seeks to attain.

In this context, allow me to briefly touch upon on the financial situation of AALCO. As we all are aware the AALCO has still not recovered from the financial crisis. There are several reasons for the current financial crisis faced by AALCO. These are massive accumulation of arrears, non-revision of scale of contribution for the last sixteen years, inflation and devaluation of US Dollar, and high maintenance and operational costs in the permanent Headquarters building. Moreover, 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. I appeal to all Member States to seriously address the above-mentioned issues in the deliberations to be followed.

In view of the severe financial crisis faced by the AALCO and with the aim of finding solutions to overcome the crisis, in my capacity as the President of the Forty-Seventh Session of AALCO, I convened an "Extraordinary Session of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization" on 1st 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. I wish that this Session will realize the importance of revising the scale of contributions and it would be adopted unanimously. This is very essential towards survival, strengthening and revitalizing the AALCO. I believe that the AALCO could achieve greater heights in fulfillment of its obligations towards its Member States if the financial situation improves.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to briefly place on record information about some of the important activities of the AALCO during my tenure as the President of the Forty-Seventh Session of AALCO.

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), in my capacity as the President of the Forty-Seventh Session of AALCO I made statements on 31st July 2008 and 24th July 2009. I 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 as well as the major activities undertaken by AALCO during the year.

The Meeting of Legal Advisers of AALCO Member States was held on 24th October 2008 in New York. At that meeting there was an exchange of views on issues under consideration of the Sixth Committee. The President of the International Court of Justice, the Legal Counsel of the United Nations, and the Vice Chairman of the Sixth Committee also addressed the Meeting. In addition to the Member States of AALCO, several non-member States participated in these meetings. This meeting was followed by the AALCO-ILC Joint Meeting to discuss matters regarding the work of the ILC at its Sixtieth Session.

It may be recalled that the General Assembly, in its Resolution 62/66 of 6 December 2007, had invited Member States, in association with regional organizations, professional associations, academic institutions and Members of the Commission to convene national or regional meetings to be dedicated to the work of the Commission in view of its Sixtieth Anniversary. Accordingly, AALCO, on 2nd December 2008, convened a Commemorative Seminar on Sixty Years of the International Law Commission to mark the established working relationship between AALCO and the Commission. The Seminar focused on the Role of the International Law Commission in the Twenty-first Century, and Inter-Linkages between the work of the International Law Commission and AALCO and Ensuring Adequate Reflection of Asian-African Concerns in ILC's work.

The activities of the Centre for Research and Training (CRT) of the AALCO got momentum by successfully organizing the first ever, two-week training programme on “General Course in International Law” from 3rd to 14th November 2008 at the Headquarters of AALCO in New Delhi. Officials and Diplomats of AALCO Member States attended the Meeting and the programme was highly beneficial for them.

AALCO organized a one-day Seminar on “The International Criminal Court: Emerging Issues and Future Challenges”, in collaboration with the Government of Japan on 18th March 2009 in New Delhi. The Seminar examined issues relating to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, its contemporary relevance to the AALCO Member States, the progress on defining the crime of “aggression” and matters relating to the upcoming Review Conference. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of Japan for taking keen interest in the programme and sponsoring the event and I hope many more Member States would come up with this kind of initiatives in the future.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, redefining AALCO's role and achieving its noble objectives, taking into account the needs of the Member States in the twenty first century is a major task to be accomplished. International law is a major tool in the modern world to achieve the aspirations of the Asian and African countries. Here AALCO and its Annual Sessions have a major role to play, in reaching a common understanding in the diverse areas of international law. I hope the Forty-Eighth Session will pave a new direction for AALCO. I wish the Session all success. I thank you all for a patient hearing.

4. Inaugural Address by The Honourable Dato' Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department of Malaysia

The Honourable Tan Sri Abdul Gani Patail, the Attorney General of Malaysia, host of the Forty-Eighth Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization's (AALCO's) Annual Session,

His Excellency Mr. Narinder Singh, Joint Secretary and Legal Adviser, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India and President of the Forty-Seventh Session of AALCO,

His Excellency Professor Dr. Rahmat Mohamad, the Secretary General of AALCO,

Your Excellencies, Ministers of Justice, Ministers of Law, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Attorneys General, Distinguished Delegates and Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh and Good Morning.

It is a great pleasure for me to join you this morning as you gather here for the Forty-Eighth AALCO Annual Session. Let me first and foremost record my heartiest appreciation to the organiser of the Forty-Eighth AALCO Annual Session for inviting me to be a part of this esteemed Session.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome all Distinguished Delegates and speakers, who have travelled from near and far to participate in the Forty-Eighth AALCO Annual Session. To you, I bid a warm and heartfelt *Selamat Datang* or Welcome to Malaysia.

The presence of prominent speakers, both from abroad and locally, further adds credence to the Forty-Eighth AALCO Annual Session.

Being an inter-governmental organization which champions aspirations of the Asian-African countries on international law issues, AALCO has grown in prominence to be one of the most influential inter-governmental groups at the international setting. The collective and cohesive support garnered from each Member State would undoubtedly solidify AALCO to formulate stronger views and positions at various multilateral forums. The Government of Malaysia, through the participation of the Attorney General's Chambers in many of the AALCO's Sessions is a sheer testimony of our relentless support and commitment to the Organization.

The Forty-Eighth AALCO Annual Session comes at yet another critical time where the world is facing global financial meltdown. As world economies have become increasingly interconnected, globalization has resulted in the liberalization and integration of the economy, freer movements of capital, goods, services and investments. Market liberalization, which is a matter of national policy, if not properly strategised, may result in economic disruption. Hence, it is with great interest that I note in the programme that several topics have been selected for deliberations during this Session. The topic on "*Managing the Global Financial Crisis - Sharing of Experience*" would certainly be of mutual benefit to all of us. Together we must address ways to weather global financial turmoil by sharing our knowledge and experience.

When the 1997 economic crisis hit Asia, various economic strategies were pursued. Malaysia adopted capital control policy to regulate movements of international capital, while some followed macro-economic models as advised by the International Monetary Funds (IMF). The interaction between the macro-economic policies and enabling legal framework to fight recession cannot be ignored. Despite the IMF Articles of Agreement, there are now various creative provisions formulated under the Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) to address issues on financial and macro-economic stability, such as the "Prudential Measures" and the "Balance of Payment" Articles. Thus, it is timely that the Forty-Eighth AALCO Annual Session takes the initiative to deliberate on intricate legal and economic issues on managing global financial crisis.

We are living in an increasingly inter-dependent world, thus it is imperative for us to broaden our horizons to look beyond our borders. Discussion on the topics of "*Transnational Migration - Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants*", "*Delimitation of Maritime Boundary*," and "*Maritime Security and Piracy*" would be of everyone's concern and interest. The resurgence and increase in piracy in the current economic slowdown is worrying. More so, since the shipping industry transports the main bulk of the world trade cargoes such as petroleum, gas and food supplies, income generated by States from this commercial activity help to sustain the basic needs and amenities of their nation. The complexity of maritime geography which results in overlapping maritime claims has also created tensions among States when exercising their jurisdiction in countering maritime threats and ensuring maritime safety and security. In protecting our national security, trafficking in persons, especially women and children, has also become a serious problem with the increasing involvement of organised criminal groups. In addition to criminalising the trafficking in persons in all its forms, I implore that we further enhance our border control measures to fight trafficking in persons on the global scale. I believe that the Forty-Eighth AALCO Annual Session will deliberate on all these topics with great interest and enthusiasm

so as to inculcate awareness, and forge closer international co-operations on issues of universal concern.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, in order to be able to rise to the challenges being posed to the government in this era of globalisation, especially with the emergence of new and complex issues facing a country which needs the expertise of a legal mind to understand its complexities, government lawyers need to be continuously educated and trained to ensure that their knowledge and skills develop in tandem with current needs. The role of education, research and training as a transformational tool in developing human capital with expertise on various subjects of international law can be found entrenched in the Centre of Training and Research of AALCO ("the Centre").

I appreciate that the Centre has organised training programmes and internships to enable cross-fertilisation of ideas with regards to the most recent development on various international law issues. Not only will this training programme help us keep abreast with the prevailing issues of international law, it will also enrich our understanding on Asian-African values and legal traditions, and effectively address the Asian-African concerns. Hence, it is my fervent hope that AALCO would emerge as a solid training provider to enhance the professional expertise in international law, with specific focus on the problems encountered in the Asian and African countries.

In the true spirit of continued intellectual discourse, I am delighted to note that AALCO will launch its publication on *"Essays on Contemporary Issues in International Law"* at this Forty-Eighth AALCO Annual Session. This publication is indeed commendable, and would remarkably contribute to the ongoing debates on numerous critical areas of international law, ranging from human rights, humanitarian intervention, terrorism, environment and the World Trade Organisation. For this, I sincerely applaud AALCO and the Centre. I believe that this publication will further augment AALCO's noble endeavours to serve as an important platform available for intellectual and apolitical discourse on issues relating to international law.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I am confident that this Session will see AALCO emerge stronger, financially and institutionally. I pray that all of you will have a productive and fruitful meeting. And I hope that the resolutions adopted here at this Forty-Eighth AALCO Annual Session will greatly contribute towards a positive revitalisation of AALCO.

While you partake in the serious discussion at hand, please take a moment or two to enjoy the gastronomical paradise that we have to offer as a result of our multi-cultural society, and not to mention the warm Malaysian hospitality, which is a signature quality of our proud identity, *"Malaysia, Truly Asia"*.

I believe that the organisers have arranged for visits to the historical city of Malacca and our capital city of Kuala Lumpur in the programme, so do take advantage of the current Malaysian Mega Sale Carnival.

With that, I wish all delegates and participants every success in your deliberations and have an enjoyable stay. Thank you.

5. Vote of Thanks by His Excellency Mr. Jeffrey Radebe, Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development, Republic of South Africa and the President of the Forty-Sixth Session of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization

Excellencies: the Honorable Dato' Seri Mohamed Nazri Bin Abdul Aziz, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department; the Attorney-General of Malaysia, His Excellency *Tan Sri* Abdul Gani Patail; President of the Forty-Seventh Session of AALCO, the Honorable Narinder Singh; the Secretary-General of AALCO, His Excellency Professor Dr Rahmat Bin Mohamad, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen:

We congregate each year under this umbrella body, the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization, as nations from the two continents, who share a common vision of seeking to make the world a better and a safer place to live in. This we can achieve in many and creative ways. The most effective of these, at an international platform, is cooperation. It is through cooperation of Member States that individual experiences and collective wisdom will guide us to weather the storm, as it were. It is these challenges that include the global economic meltdown, the manifestation of which has been in different ways that include job losses. We are required as governments of individual states, to bring about programs that must be more responsive to the current challenges that face the world.

As the President of the Forty-Sixth Session of AALCO, I wish to take this opportunity to register on behalf of the Republic of South Africa and its people, our gratitude to this forum for having given us an opportunity to hold the baton from 2007 to 2008. I wish to acknowledge the contributions made by my predecessor, former Justice Minister Bridgette Mabandla. As a country, South Africa will continue to identify and associate with those progressive nations of the world that seek to advance the cause of global security towards the attainment of prosperity and lasting stability. These programs must be well anchored in our regions in order for their impact to be felt by the rest of the world.

As individual states and governments, our responsibilities and obligations to those who put us into positions of authority are many. Notwithstanding these, governments in many ways continue to pledge support to international obligations and programs. An approach that accommodates both domestic demands and international obligations is a necessary one for the achievement of all our objectives. To this end, we wish to thank the government of Malaysia for hosting us for the duration of our stay here. We would like to request the Honorable Dato' Seri Mohamed Nazri Bin Abdul Aziz, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department to convey our gratitude to the people of Malaysia for their hospitality.

To the Attorney-General of Malaysia, His Excellency *Tan Sri* Abdul Gani Patail, you provided guidance on all technical data necessary that make this Forty-Eighth Session of AALCO to focus on all critical and current challenges. The session must deliberate on these issues and find solutions and concrete programs of action that must change our lives for the better.

The office of the Secretary-General of AALCO is a critical one. It is one that pumps life blood that ensures the body and all its organs function properly. To the Secretary-General, His Excellency Professor Dr. Rahmat Bin Mohamad we say: thank you for your leadership - you have steered the ship so well. The strides you have made are by no means insignificant. We trust that under your stewardship this institution will grow from strength to strength and

will better serve those for whom it was established to serve in the first place. It is through the commitment of us all that the resolutions adopted by AALCO will translate into tangible action. Our hope therefore is that your office will keep the finger on the pulse in order to ensure that resolutions do in fact become deliverables. Ladies and gentlemen, where I come from, we aptly say: working together we can do more to ensure a better life for all. This couldn't be more true than in the extant case.

I thank His Excellency Mr. Narinder Singh for his efficient Presidency. He has served as President of AALCO twice and his keen efforts to promote AALCO are highly appreciated.

In conclusion, I would like to thank in advance the Honorable Ministers, distinguished delegates and observers for their active participation and hope that this week's deliberations will be robust and assist us in producing tangible outcomes. Thank you.

The meeting was thereafter adjourned.