



**Welcome Address by H.E. Prof. Dr. Rahmat Mohamad, Secretary-General, AALCO at the Inaugural Session of the Training Programme on International Humanitarian Law, AALCO HQ, New Delhi, 17 January 2011**

Good Evening Everybody

H.E. Mr. Gudmundur Eiriksson, Ambassador of Iceland to India

Mr. Francois Stamm, Head of Regional Delegation, International Committee of the Red Cross, New Delhi

Excellencies,

Distinguished participants of the Training Programme,

Ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset, let me welcome you all on behalf of the AALCO Secretariat and on my behalf to the Training Programme on International Humanitarian Law organized by the Centre for Research and Training of AALCO in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross, Regional Delegation of South Asia, New Delhi.

Let me briefly introduce for the benefit of participants the role of AALCO and its research and training division- Centre for Research and Training.

Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO) is an inter-governmental Organization comprising of 47 Member States from Asia

and Africa with its headquarters in New Delhi. Almost all the major States from Asia and Africa are presently Members of the Organization. It is considered to be a tangible outcome of the historic Bandung Conference, held in Indonesia, in April 1955. Its primary function is to serve as an advisory body to its Member States in the field of international law and as a forum for Asian-African co-operation in legal matters of common concern; and to consider and deliberate on issues related to international law that may be referred to the Organization by the Member States and to make such recommendations to governments as deemed necessary. In the light of the Organization's growing status and functions, the United Nations General Assembly by a Resolution, adopted at its thirty-fifth Session in 1980 decided to accord AALCO Permanent Observer Status at the United Nations. The Organization also maintains Permanent Observer Missions to the United Nations at New York, and Vienna. Further, AALCO has entered into co-operation agreements with several international organizations which provide very useful basis for organizing joint meetings and seminars on topics of mutual interest with these Organizations. Also, five Regional Arbitration Centres were established under the auspices of AALCO, which would function as institutions with the objectives to promote commercial arbitration in the Asian-African region and provide for conducting international arbitrations under these Centres.

One of the key areas where AALCO is planning to focus is on capacity-building. At AALCO's 41<sup>st</sup> Session held in Abuja, Nigeria in 2002, it was decided to rename the Data Collection Unit, which was established in 1989 in the Secretariat as the Centre for Research and Training (CRT). The

mandate was further strengthened at the Seoul Session, 2003 whereby the CRT was called upon to foster capacity-building of the Center to carry out further research projects on international law and organize training programmes for the benefit of nationals of Member States handling international law issues. The CRT has brought out several publications, Research Studies and organized seminars, workshops and training programmes.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

Since its inception AALCO has given equal importance to issues of human rights and humanitarian law along with other topics of international law. In recent years, it has been focusing its attention on human rights and humanitarian law matters which include Status and Treatment of Refugees, Legal Protection of Migrant Workers, Establishing Cooperation against Trafficking in Women and Children, International Terrorism and Deportation of Palestinians.

I would also like to take this opportunity to highlight the close association which AALCO has with the ICRC. AALCO's association with ICRC is not new, it started with concrete steps in 1997 when both organizations jointly organized a special meeting in conjunction with AALCO's Thirty-Sixth Annual Session held in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran on an important topic entitled "Inter-related aspects of International Criminal Court and International Humanitarian Law". Thereafter, Special Meetings were jointly organized with the ICRC at the Forty-Second Annual Session, Seoul, Republic of Korea (2003); Forty-Fifth Golden Jubilee Session & Forty-Seventh Session, Headquarters, New Delhi, in the years 2006 & 2008

respectively; and Forty-Ninth Annual Session held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 2010 on different aspects of International Humanitarian Law. Also in the year 2005, AALCO-ICRC Conference to Mark the Publication of ICRC Study on “Customary International Humanitarian Law” was organized in New Delhi.

AALCO & ICRC have formalized our cooperation by initialing a cooperation agreement in New Delhi on 17 December 2002 and by signing it in Geneva on 7 July 2003. Promotion and development of international humanitarian law is the primary objective of our cooperation agreement. It is the determination to uphold international humanitarian law and disseminate it amongst Member States that continues to remain as the guiding principle for the joint efforts of both the organizations.

The present training programme is one more initiative organized in cooperation with the ICRC. I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude on behalf of the AALCO Secretariat and on my behalf for all the support and cooperation extended by the ICRC in organizing this training programme.

I also take this opportunity to extend our sincere thanks to H.E. Mr. Gudmundur Eiriksson, Ambassador of Iceland to India for accepting our invitation at a short notice to deliver the inaugural address. Ambassador Eiriksson has a distinguished career to his credit. He was a Judge at the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea from 1996 to 2002 and was a member of the United Nations International Law Commission from 1987 to 1996. He was appointed as the first Chairman of the Icelandic National

Committee on International Humanitarian Law (2008). In the field of academics, he was a Lecturer at the University of Iceland from 1987 to 1996 and a Visiting Professor of Law at the School of Law, University of New Mexico, United States from 1994 to 1995. He was Director of International Law and Human Rights Studies and Dean for Cooperative Programmes from 2001 to 2003 and Professor and Head of the Department of International Law and Human Rights from 2005 to 2008 at the University for Peace in Costa Rica.

With these words, I once again welcome all the participants to the training programme and thank them for showing keen interest in the training programme.

Now, May I welcome Mr. Francois Stamm, Head of Regional Delegation, International Committee of the Red Cross, New Delhi to deliver his introductory remarks.

Thank you