

Agenda Item 22: Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian African Legal Consultative Committee

Statement by Hon'ble Mr. Prem Gupta, MP on October 25, 2000

Mr. President,

It is with great interest we heard the presentation made by the Secretary General of the Asian African Legal Consultative Committee. This being his first appearance before the General Assembly, we congratulate him for his comprehensive survey of cooperation that exists between United Nations and the Asian African Legal Consultative Committee. We wish him well and have confidence that under his leadership the Committee will attain new heights in serving not only the interests of the Asian African States but also that of the wider membership of the United Nations.

It is with great pleasure that we would like to inform the Assembly that India and the Asian African Legal Consultative Committee have signed the Headquarters Agreement in April this year. Even though the Committee has been situated in New Delhi since its inception and enjoyed all the privileges and immunities all along, the conclusion of a Headquarters Agreement, coming after the establishment of the permanent headquarters of the Committee in New Delhi, is an important landmark in the relationship between the Committee and India as the host country. The Government of India is making all efforts to advance the construction of a suitable Headquarters building for the office of the AALCC and the residence of the Secretary General for which a grant of \$ 1.5 million has been earmarked in its budget.

In this connection, it is appropriate to place on record our sincere and highest appreciation for the work and personality of Mr. Tang Chengyuan, who completed his term of office as Secretary General of the AALCC in May 2000. His service to the Committee and contribution to the Asian African Legal Community during his term of six years was marked by economy, efficiency and political wisdom. We wish him well in all his future endeavours.

The present Secretary General, Ambassador Wafiq Zahir Kamil, has an ambitious programme and busy schedule ahead of him. His energy and enthusiasm will see the AALCC successfully through many of the programmes. The agenda set out by the last Annual Meeting of the Committee held at Cairo in February 2000 is an impressive one. The new areas to which reference has been made by the Secretary General today are challenging.

The success of the Committee's work over the years is attributable to its basic features. The main objectives and functions of the AALCC are several fold. The Committee was established essentially to promote international legal cooperation, develop and disseminate expertise in international law by organising annual meetings, seminars and workshops, focussing on current issues of international law under consideration in different forums of the United Nations and other bodies and to contribute to the process of codification and development of international law. While all endeavours in the field of international law have their political and policy implications, the efforts of the Committee have always been

confined to the areas of legal interest, and issues of political controversy have been left for other forums, within and outside the United Nations.

At the technical level, there are several areas to which the Committee could give priority: the work of the International Law Commission, the contribution being made by the International Court of Justice, evolving international criminal law, legal issues arising from multitude of international conventions under negotiation, the operation of the regime of international seabed area, principles applicable to outer space activities and environmental law.

We are grateful to the AALCC for taking initiatives in organising special meetings on subjects of contemporary relevance in cooperation with other International Organisations like WIPO and WTO. These meetings have resulted in publication of some useful materials. In a joint initiative with UNEP last year, the AALCC brought out a handbook on environmental law which is designed to provide its users with a comprehensive collection of important global and regional environmental law documents. The AALCC publications are useful for building national and regional capacities to enhance compliance with and implementation of global and regional agreements.

We wish the new Secretary General all success in his present term of office and assure him of our full cooperation.