



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF LEGAL AFFAIRS**

**Remarks to the 54th Annual Session
of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO)**

**Special meeting commemorating
the 60th anniversary of the Bandung Conference**

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Diaoyutai Guesthouse
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Mr./Ms. Chair,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentleman,

It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to say a few words in recognition of the 60th anniversary of the Bandung Conference. While others here today involved in the inter-governmental process will certainly be able to address this subject in much greater detail, I will speak briefly to what I consider to be two of the main legacies of the Bandung Conference. The **first** is its contribution to multilateralism; and the **second** is the importance of principles as touchstones for effective international relations among States.

On the first point—its contribution to multilateralism—Bandung represents an example of what can be achieved by coming together to deliberate on issues of mutual concern in an open, transparent and constructive manner.

The inter-governmental conference was a landmark in this regard. It was attended by representatives from twenty-nine highly diverse States, convening at a time of great complexity and uncertainty in international affairs. The final communiqué of the Bandung Conference—and the “spirit of Bandung” that it represented—has served as the principled basis for the non-aligned movement, which has of course been very influential in international affairs, including in the deliberative fora of the United Nations.

It is notable in this regard that while the Bandung Conference took place outside of United Nations auspices, the outcome of the deliberations served to strengthen and significantly reinforce the multilateral, Charter-based order.

This is reflected in the principles adopted at Bandung, which reference the Charter specifically, as well as in the exchanges of the conference participants, where ample support for the purposes, principles and institutional processes of the United Nations were expressed. The final communiqué explicitly calls for universal membership in the United Nations—as well as heightened representation for States from the Asian-African region in the Security Council.

It was through commitments such as those made at Bandung that the Organization was able to strengthen its legitimacy and universal membership and deepen its institutional foundations in all corners of the world. The result has been an ongoing commitment deliberation, within the multilateral discussions and consultations of the United Nations, on the substantive issues raised by the participants in the Bandung Conference.

The Bandung Conference also led to the establishment of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization, which has served as a constructive and important venue for mutual consultation and exchange between AALCO and the United Nations on issues of shared concern. The present consultative session is just another example of this long history of fruitful cooperation.

I would also like to say a few words about a second legacy of the Bandung Conference, namely the importance of principles as touchstones for effective international relations.

The final communiqué from Bandung famously enshrined ten principles aimed at “effectively contribut[ing] to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security”, including respect for fundamental human rights, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-intervention and non-interference in the internal affairs of another country, individual and collective self-defense, the prohibition on aggression or the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country, the peaceful settlement of disputes and respect for international obligations.

The UN, of course, has also adopted a number of principles that guide its action, including those reflected in the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation between States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, which is enshrined in General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV) of 24 October 1970. The Friendly Relations Declaration, as it is known, and the deliberations among Member States that led to

its adoption, greatly contributed to shared understandings about principles of international law at the United Nations.

In my view, principles, such as those put forth in the final communiqué from the Bandung conference and those reflected in the Friendly Relations Declaration, are essential. They guide us and frame the answers to complex questions. They serve as important sources of stability—clarifying, for all States, what they might expect, and what is expected of them.

Importantly, principles also provide enough flexibility to account for situations that may have not been foreseen at the time of their establishment. They are capable of incorporating change and adapting to evolving circumstances.

In addition, principles do not operate in a vacuum; rather, in order to be effective, they must be applied in a cohesive and mutually-reinforcing way. The necessary inclusivity of principles was recognized at Bandung. The ten principles adopted there are not “either/or” propositions; rather, through adherence to all of the principles, the States gathered at the conference endeavored to establish a more cooperative and peaceful order.

The current international environment both challenges our principles and offers opportunities for their reexamination and further development. Through the application of principles in concrete cases, and the interpretation and analysis that this requires, we both strengthen our principles and, depending on the case, have an opportunity to reexamine their meaning in their current context.

Over the past year, we have encountered an unprecedented global health crisis with the Ebola disease. We have also been faced with the terrorist threat of the so-called Islamic State that exceeds our worst fears. In too many places around the world, people continue to live in abject poverty—in too many places, armed conflict persists at the expense of peace, education and development.

In such trying circumstances, we rely on our principles, such as those enshrined in the Charter and reinforced at Bandung, to formulate an appropriate response.

The process of applying our principles to complex problems is not a simple one. It requires us to critically examine the operation of our principles in the current environment, taking into account their history and prior application.

If, through this process, we find that longstanding principles and their application remain effective, then we confirm the principles and make them even stronger. If it appears that either the principles or their application may require some recalibration, then we should examine carefully both the principle itself and

the way that we invoke it, making adjustments, as necessary, based on our experience and lessons that we may have learned.

In either case, the process is an invaluable one. Through such critical examination, we enhance the principles that guide our action. This allows us not only to deal with the issues at hand, but also to better prepare for those unforeseen challenges that will inevitably arise.

I thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on this important issue. I will look forward to our discussion today.