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**MESSAGE TO THE FIFTY-FOURTH ANNUAL SESSION
OF THE ASIAN-AFRICAN LEGAL CONSULTATIVE ORGANIZATION (AALCO)
Beijing, 13 – 17 April 2015**

*Delivered by Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares, UN Legal Counsel,
and Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs*

It is a pleasure to greet the governments, international legal practitioners and academics gathered in Diaoyutai State Guesthouse. I thank Mr. Rahmat Mohamad, Secretary-General of AALCO, for the invitation to address this important session, which will focus on some of the most pressing legal challenges facing the world today.

As an advisory body of legal experts, AALCO is an essential venue for exchanges of views on matters of common concern. AALCO has also forged many close connections with the United Nations. To cite just one example, your planned discussions on the rule of law, environment and sustainable development is of great interest for the ongoing deliberations of Member States on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

The international community confronts many complex crises, from international terrorism and armed conflict to environmental harm, poverty and infectious disease. Adherence to international law is central to our efforts to address these challenges and build a safer and more just world for all.

International law has been at the foundation of United Nations since its creation. In the preamble of the Charter, the Member States express their determination “to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained”. The Charter also calls for the General Assembly to initiate studies and make recommendations “encouraging the progressive development of international law and its codification”.

Seventy years into its existence, the Organization is actively engaged in promoting and ensuring respect for the rule of law both at the international and at the national levels. The International Law Commission, established by the General Assembly, has also been active in drafting international conventions and formulating rules of international law in various fields.

Such activities are not possible without the continuous support and guidance of United Nations Member States and the organizations in which they participate. The United Nations will continue to count on AALCO to generate new ideas on how we can work together to achieve our mutual objectives. In that spirit of partnership, I wish you all a fruitful and enriching discussion.