

**ASIAN OMBUDSMAN ASSOCIATION**  
**23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors**  
**18 October, 2022, Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan**

**MINUTES**

The 23<sup>rd</sup> annual meeting of the Board of Directors (BOD) of the Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA) was held on 18 October 2022 at Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan. The meeting was presided by the President AOA, His Excellency Mr. Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi, Federal Ombudsman of Pakistan. Ambassador (R) Abdul Moiz Bokhari, Executive Secretary of the AOA Secretariat, coordinated the meeting.

2. The following members of the BOD participated in the meeting:

<b><u>Sr. No.</u></b>	<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Position</u></b>	<b><u>Organization</u></b>
1.	Mr. Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi	President	Federal Ombudsman, Pakistan
2.	Ms. Sabina Aliyeva	Vice President	Commissioner of Human Rights of the Republic of Azerbaijan
3.	Ms. Winnie Wai-yin CHIU	Secretary	The Ombudsman, Hong Kong – China
4.	Judge Dr. Ahmad Rahmanian (Vice President)	Treasurer	Represented General Inspection Organization, Iran
5.	Mr. DING Tao (Minister-Counsellor)	Member	Represented National Commission of Supervision, China
6.	Mr. Mokhammad Najih	Member	Chairman, Ombudsman of Indonesia
7.	Mr. WATANABE Hiroyuki (Director of Administrative Counselling Division)	Member	Represented Administrative Evaluation Bureau (AEB), Ministry of Internal Affairs & Communications, Japan
8.	Mr. Seref MALKOC	Member	Chief Ombudsman of Republic of Turkiye
9.	Amb (R) Abdul Moiz Bokhari	Executive Secretary	AOA Secretariat

**Agenda Item No. 1**

**Remarks by the Chair and the Host**

3. The President welcomed the participants to the Board meeting which was taking place after a gap of two years. He stated that following the last meeting in November 2019, the years 2020 and 2021 witnessed an onslaught of COVID-19 pandemic resulting in border closures, lockdowns and travel restrictions across the globe. The AOA membership was no exception and the Association, too, remained in a slowdown mode. While highlighting the need to catch up for the lost time, the President expressed his resolve to working closely with the membership and benefitting from their experience and wise counsel in running the affairs of the Association. He paid rich tributes to his predecessor, H.E. Syed Tahir Shahbaz, for his meritorious services to the Association who completed his term of office as Federal Ombudsman of Pakistan on 26 December 2021. The President also recognized the contribution of all those distinguished colleagues who guided the work of the Association as members of the Board in 2019 and have since completed the terms of their office. He wished them good health, happiness and success in their future pursuits.

4. The President thanked H.E.Ms. Sabina Aliyeva, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Republic of Azerbaijan for hosting the meeting and invited her to deliver her welcoming remarks. The Hon'ble Commissioner expressed her happiness on the reunion of the members of the AOA family once again at Baku and expressed confidence that the Board will take important decisions in carrying forward the objectives of the Association. She wished the participants every success in their deliberations and a very pleasant stay at Baku.

5. Thereafter, the Chair asked the Executive Secretary to proceed with the Agenda. At this stage, the Executive Secretary read out the message of greetings received from H.E. Ms. Hyun Heui JEON, Chairperson, Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission (ACRC), Republic of Korea. The Hon'ble member in her letter dated 11 October 2022 addressed to the Board members regretted her inability to participate in person due to a fixed schedule for domestic affairs. She emphasized the increasing role of ombudsmen at times of crisis to ease the burden of the people by visiting the place where people were having grievances, listening to their

hardships and addressing unreasonable administrative practices. It was, therefore, imperative for the ombudsmen from each country to make efforts to work in solidarity and to put their heads together in order to weather the crisis. She wished the participants a very successful BOD meeting and the International Conference. The Board greatly appreciated the kind gesture by the Hon'ble member from the Republic of Korea.

### **Agenda Item No. 2**

#### **Approval of the Agenda of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors**

6. The draft agenda of the 23<sup>rd</sup> BOD meeting was presented by the Executive Secretary for the approval of the Board. The members were apprised that the draft agenda was somewhat extensive as the BOD was meeting after a gap of two years. Besides the first few items of routine nature, the draft agenda predominantly comprises items that directly impacted the future course of the Association.

7. No objection, observations or comments were received from the participants.

#### **Decision:**

*The Board unanimously approved the Agenda.*

### **Agenda Item No. 3**

#### **Approval of the minutes of the last (22<sup>nd</sup>) Meeting of the Board of Directors of AOA (Istanbul, 17<sup>th</sup> November, 2019)**

8. The draft minutes of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Board of Directors of Asian Ombudsman Association, held on 17 November, 2019 at Istanbul (Turkey), were circulated among the Hon'ble members of the Board vide e-mail dated 13 January, 2020 for observations and feedback. In response, the observations received from H.E. Ombudsman Hong Kong and H.E. Director General, Administration Evaluation Bureau, Japan were duly incorporated in the minutes. The amended final minutes had already been circulated among the members vide e-mail dated 17 February 2020. No meeting of the BOD and the General Assembly could take

place during 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, the minutes of the 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the BOD were submitted for formal confirmation by the Board of Directors.

**Decision:**

*In the absence of any objections/observations, the minutes of the 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the BOD were confirmed by the Board and shall be placed before the General Assembly for approval in terms of Article 6(4)(f) of the Bye-Laws of the Association.*

**Agenda Item No.4**

**Report of the President, for the years 2019-21, on the Activities of the Association in terms of clause 5-5(i) of the Code of Conduct of Business of the AOA**

9. As per Article 9(2) of the Bye Laws of the AOA and Clause 5-5(i) of the Code of Conduct of Business of the AOA, an Annual Report on the activities of the Association is to be presented by the President to the Board. Accordingly, a consolidated report of the President for the years 2019-2021 was placed before the Board for consideration. The President emphasized that despite the unfortunate slow down for over two years due to COVID-19 pandemic, there was no slackening on the part of the membership or the AOA Secretariat in their commitment to the goals and objectives of the Association. The AOA Secretariat continued to pursue the mandated activities during this period and has identified various items on the agenda of the current Board impacting directly on the future course of the Association.

10. A short documentary prepared by the AOA Secretariat titled “Promoting Ombudsmanship in Asia and Beyond”, highlighting the potential of the ombudsman fraternity and the role that it can play in realizing the ultimate goals of good governance, rule of law and protection of human rights was presented under this item.

**Decision:**

*The Board appreciated the consolidated Report of the President for the year 2019-2021 and the presentation of a documentary “Promoting Ombudsmanship in Asia and Beyond”. The same shall be placed before the General Assembly for ratification in terms of Article 6(4)(f) of the Bye-Laws of the AOA.*

**Agenda Item No.5**

**Approval of the Audited Financial Statements of the AOA Accounts for the years 2019, 2020 and 2021**

11. The Audit Statements were prepared by M/s W.A. Associates, for the years 2019, 2020 and 2021 in terms of Article 6-5 of the Code of Conduct of Business. Judge Dr. Ahmad Rahmanian, representing the Treasurer, formally placed the Audited Statements for the years 2019, 2020 and 2021 before the Board, in terms of Article 8(2) of the Bye Laws of the AOA.

**Decision:**

*The Board approved the Audited Statements for the years 2019, 2020 and 2021 and gave its consent to place the same before the General Assembly for ratification under Article 6(4)(f) of the Bye Laws of the AOA.*

**Agenda Item No. 6**

**Consideration of application for membership of the AOA from:-**

**Office of the Ulsan Metropolitan Government Civic Ombudsman  
Committee, Republic of Korea**

12. The members were apprised that an application for the membership of the AOA was received from the Office of the Ulsan Metropolitan Government Civic Ombudsman Committee, Republic of Korea. The AOA Secretariat drafted working paper for the Executive Committee of the Board to consider and recommend their proposal for the membership of the applicant, in terms of Section 1-4 of the Code of Conduct. The review carried out by the AOA Secretariat concluded that the applicant is eligible for membership under the existing criteria identified in the Code of Conduct.

13. The Executive Committee comprising, the President, the Vice President and the Secretary of the AOA considered the application through circulation and recommended that the Board of Directors may accept the application under Section 1-5 of the Code of Conduct of Business of the AOA.

14. In terms of Article 5(1) & (6) of the Bye Laws of the AOA, Office of the Ulsan Metropolitan Government Civic Ombudsman Committee, Republic of Korea can be granted Full Membership (Without Voting Right) as the Republic of Korea already enjoys the Voting Right.

**Decision:**

*The Board of Directors unanimously approved the application of the Office of the Ulsan Metropolitan Government Civic Ombudsman Committee, Republic of Korea for full membership without voting right under Article 5(1) & (6) of the Bye-Laws of the AOA. The Board, in terms of Section 1-5 & 1-6 of the Code of Conduct of Business recommended for approval, to the General Assembly membership of the said institution under Article 6(4)(a) of the Bye Laws of the AOA.*

**Agenda Item No. 7**

**Conduct of elections for the BOD membership and office bearers in 2023**

15. Elections for the current membership of the Board of Directors (BOD) and its office bearers were held during the 16<sup>th</sup> meeting of the General Assembly meeting for a four years term on 18 November, 2019 at Istanbul (Turkey). The Executive Secretary apprised the members that the next elections will be held during the upcoming 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the General Assembly in 2023. The Board was accordingly requested to finalize in the present meeting an action plan for holding elections in the next year.

16. Procedure for holding elections in a fair and transparent manner is laid down in the Association's Bye-Laws (Article 5(10), Article 7(1) and 7(2)) and in the Code of Conduct of Business (Section-II, paras 2-1 to 2-12). The Executive Secretary stated that as stipulated in the above provisions and guided by the procedure approved by the 21<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Board of Directors (30 October 2018 - Baku) for the elections held in 2019, the election process would start three months ahead of the scheduled date of the next General Assembly. The first sixty days would be allocated for receiving nomination forms, duly signed by the candidate and one proposer and one seconder who shall be full members of the Association and eligible in terms of para 2-3 of Section-II of the Code of Conduct of Business. The next 15 days would be allocated for scrutiny of nomination papers by the Executive Committee (the President, the

Vice President and the Secretary), and thereafter, the final list of candidates will be circulated among the AOA members. Details of all these actions will be placed before the next Board meeting which would precede the 17<sup>th</sup> General Assembly meeting in 2023. The elections will be conducted in the General Assembly under the Chairmanship of the most senior member of the Association, who is not a candidate for any position, through a secret ballot and votes will be counted in front of the members and results will be announced accordingly.

17. Timeframe and venue of the next BOD and the General Assembly meetings in 2023 was considered and decided upon separately under Agenda Item No.15.

**Decision:**

*The Board unanimously approved the procedure as detailed above for the conduct of elections of the members and office bearers of the Board of Directors to be held in the 17<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in 2023.*

**Agenda Item No. 8**

**Status of Payments Received on Account of Annual Membership Fee**

18. The Executive Secretary apprised the members that an exercise was undertaken in the AOA Secretariat to reconcile the Bank statement with the record of the annual membership fee received from the member institutions. For this purpose, statements for the last three years (2019, 2020 and 2021) were obtained from the concerned Bank. It has been noticed that in some cases no bank record confirming receipt of annual membership fee was available. In case of some members, the actual amount credited in the AOA account was less than the fixed membership fee which at present is \$1000 for Full Members. It seems that the difference was due to service charges deducted by the remitter Bank. Accordingly, the AOA Secretariat has addressed a communication to all esteemed members seeking verification of entries in the Bank statement. The Executive Secretary stated that the Secretariat was pursuing the matter with the member institutions and would submit a position paper on the subject in the next meeting of the BOD.

**Decision:**

*The Board underlined the implications for non-payment of dues by the members and directed that:*

- i) The AOA Secretariat issue reminders to member institutions who have not paid annual membership fee since 2019 or made only part payments or remitted less amounts and submit a position paper on the subject in the next meeting of the BOD.*
- ii) The Board appreciated the member institutions that have been making regular and timely payments of the annual membership fee and invited others to do the same as required in terms of the AOA regulations and clear the outstanding dues accordingly.*

**Agenda Item No. 9**

**Up-gradation of the Resource Centre at the AOA Secretariat**

19. The members were apprised that the upgradation of the Resource Centre at the AOA Secretariat will contribute significantly towards achieving the objectives of the AOA (Section-4, Bye-Laws of the AOA). The facility will serve as a store house of information and material about the growth, evolution and progress of Ombudsmanship in the Asian region. The upgraded Resource Centre shall contain all necessary documents (online as well as hard copies) in respect of the AOA member institutions including books, professional journals/magazines, annual reports, research papers, documentaries and related publications. The resource centre facility will be available on gratis basis to researchers, scholars, institutions and professionals from the AOA member countries.

20. The Executive Secretary stated that in this context, the AOA Secretariat vide its e-mail of 29 March, 2022 has requested the member institutions to provide two sets of national flag (pole flag), table flag and institutional flag (if any) for placement in the main lobby of the Secretariat and use during the meetings. Due to some possible logistic constraints, the progress has been very slow. Accordingly, the AOA Secretariat proposes to arrange national flags and table flags of the AOA membership locally. Quotations were obtained from three local flag makers. The lowest quotation for supply of national flags (pole flag-6ft x 4ft) of the member institutions and table flags with rods and stands as approved by the President AOA is Pak Rs:



526,500/- equivalent to US\$ 2310/- approximately. In terms of Article 6-8 of the Code of Conduct of Business, expenditure beyond US\$ 1000/- shall require prior approval of the Board of Directors of the Association.

**Decision:**

*The Board approved the upgradation of the Resource Centre at the AOA Secretariat which will serve as a store house of information and material about the growth, evolution and progress of ombudsmanship in the Asian Region. The Board also approved in terms of Article 6-8 of the Code of Conduct of Business an expenditure of US\$ 2310/- for arranging the requisite flags from the local market and place the matter before the General Assembly for its notice.*

**Agenda Item No. 10**

**Launching of e-Profile Directory on the AOA website of the AOA Members & Alumni Members**

21. The initiative of launching e-Profile Directory of the AOA members and Alumni members was approved by the 22<sup>nd</sup> session of the Board of Directors (17 Nov. 2019 Istanbul) with a view to providing:

*“Ever ready database of the Member Institutions for their closer interaction and sharing of information and experiences supporting the cause of Ombudsmanship in the Region and beyond. Federal Ombudsman Pakistan had given his consent to manage necessary resources from his own account without any burden on the Association Funds.”*

22. Accordingly, the AOA Secretariat periodically updates the e-Profile Directory which was made some years ago, by incorporating latest information about esteemed member institutions. In this context, the entire membership was requested vide email dated 30<sup>th</sup> March, 2022 to share the necessary information with the AOA Secretariat to update the contents of e-Profile Directory.

23. As regards the Alumni Directory, information from the member institutions is still awaited.

**Decision:**

*The Board took note of the status of the e-Profile Directory and the Alumni Directory on the AOA website and decided to place it before the General Assembly for information and encouraging the member institutions to expeditiously share the requisite information with the AOA Secretariat for updating the Alumni Directory and the e-Profile Directory on regular basis.*

**Agenda Item No. 11**

**Subscription of News Items for the AOA e-Newsletter**

24. As per decision of the 18<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Board of Directors (07 March 2016, Tokyo), the AOA Secretariat is regularly issuing monthly e-Newsletter since June 2018. The member institutions were requested vide email dated 29 March, 2022 to regularly share important news items of professional interest relating to their esteemed institutions by the 25<sup>th</sup> of every month for inclusion in the upcoming monthly issue of e-Newsletter. The AOA Secretariat has upgraded the format and the layout of the e-Newsletter. It seeks active support from all member institutions to send news items for the e-Newsletter regularly to fully avail this forum for exchange of information and sharing of best practices for the purpose of promotion of ombudsmanship in Asia.

**Decision:**

*The Board underlined the significance of the e-Newsletter in promoting the objectives of the Association and appreciated the efforts of the AOA Secretariat in carrying out this initiative professionally. It gave its consent to place the matter before the General Assembly for endorsement and emphasis.*

**Agenda Item No. 12**

**AOA activities during 2022-2023**

25. In order to carry out regular activities from the AOA platform, the members were apprised that the practice of developing calendar of activities on annual basis was being followed by most international bodies. The AOA, too, can develop calendar of activities for the

current and the next year on the basis of the offers by the member institutions to undertake activities in pursuance of the objectives of the Association.

26. In this context, it was pointed out that the Federal Ombudsman's Secretariat of Pakistan is employing the latest digital tools and has perfected its Complaint Management Information System (CMIS) over the years. The Federal Ombudsman of Pakistan will be happy to share its expertise in this field and offer training to officers and staff from member institutions of the AOA. It remained ready to organize special event for this purpose.

27. The members expressed keen interest in developing Calendar of Activities for 2022-23 and agreed to provide necessary information to the Secretariat offering activities/events relating to training, sharing of experience and best practices of professional interest. It was noted that some member institutions were already undertaking activities in virtual format and such activities could also be coordinated from the AOA platform. The AOA Secretariat shall invite all member institutions to propose activities/events they wish to host during 2022-2023. Based on such offers, a calendar of activities will be developed and submitted to all members for approval through online circulation. Likewise, it was noted that some good work has been done/ in progress by some institutions and useful reports/studies on subjects of professional interest were available. These reports/studies shall be shared with the AOA Secretariat for circulation among the members.

**Decision:**

*The Board approved preparation of an annual calendar of activities and encouraged the AOA membership in terms of Article 4 (2) of Bye- Laws to offer activities/events aimed at promoting mutual cooperation and upholding the cause of ombudsmanship. It gave its consent to place the matter before the General Assembly for its notice and emphasis.*

**Agenda Item No. 13**

**Expanding Membership of the AOA**

28. The current membership of the AOA is 44 representing ombudsman institutions from 25 countries in Asia. The President highlighted the need to expand the Association's

membership in order to make it a truly representative body of the Asian region. He added that following his interaction with the ombudsman institutions from two Asian countries, the Secretariat has forwarded necessary documents and application forms for their consideration and processing. Earlier, the Board has recommended the application received from an additional institution from Republic of Korea for membership under agenda item 6. Such additions will enhance the Association's outreach, stature and add value to its professional pursuits.

**Decision:**

*The Board appreciated the efforts of the President and agreed that all members should encourage other institutions in their contact to join the ombudsman fraternity, promoting thereby the cause of ombudsmanship in the region. The matter shall also be placed before the General Assembly for its notice and emphasis.*

**Agenda Item No. 14**

**Appointment of the Executive Secretary of the AOA**

29. The President apprised the Board that Ambassador (R) Mr. Abdul Moiz Bokhari, Senior Advisor in the Federal Ombudsman's Secretariat, Islamabad has been designated as Executive Secretary AOA with effect from 9 February 2022. Ambassador Bokhari has vast experience in the diplomatic service of Pakistan and various international organizations which will come handy in better organizing the activities of the Association. The Executive Secretary shall work for the AOA without any monthly salary or remuneration. The President recommended the said appointment by the Board in terms of Article 5-1 of the Code of Conduct of Business of the AOA.

**Decision:**

*The Board approved the appointment of Ambassador (R) Abdul Moiz Bokhari as Executive Secretary of the AOA till further orders with effect from 9 February, 2022 and place the matter before the General Assembly for information.*

**Agenda Item No. 15**

**Finalization of the date and venue for the 24<sup>th</sup> meeting of the BOD and the 17<sup>th</sup> General Assembly Meeting in 2023**

30. The member institutions were invited by the AOA Secretariat to give proposals for hosting the 17<sup>th</sup> General Assembly meeting which will be preceded by the 24<sup>th</sup> meeting of the BOD in 2023. In response, communications were made from the following two member institutions:

- i) Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Republic of Tatarstan offering to host the General Assembly and the Board of Directors meetings in Kazan on 28-29 August 2023.
- ii) Two communications were received from the Office of the Vice-Chairman, National Commission of Supervision (NCS), China.

31. The Executive Secretary has been in contact with both delegations to reconfirm the status of their offers before the BOD meeting. The National Commission of Supervision of China informed that it was too early for the NCS to decide whether it can hold the BOD and the GA meetings in 2023. The esteemed institution in a very forthright and constructive manner suggested that the Board may consider the other application for hosting the above meetings, thereby facilitating the Board's approval for the offer received from the esteemed institution of the Republic of Tatarstan. However, some delegations indicated their preference for the meetings to take place in September 2023 or later.

**Decision:**

*In view of the above, the Board unanimously approved the proposal received from the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, Republic of Tatarstan to host the 24<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Board of Directors and the 17<sup>th</sup> General Assembly meeting at Kazan in 2023. The AOA Secretariat may accordingly ascertain precise dates and initiate preparatory process with the host institution for organizing the above meetings. In case, some members are not able to attend the said meetings in person, arrangements be made for participation through video/zoom link to ensure maximum attendance of the members.*

**Agenda Item No. 16**

**Any other item.**

32. The Executive Secretary apprised the members that some office bearers/members have completed the terms of their office since the last 22<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the BOD held on 17 November 2019 at Istanbul. He proposed for consideration if those former members were to be granted honorary life membership. The meeting held a brief discussion. No decision was taken as the matter required further consultation.

**Decision:**

*Based on the observations received from the esteemed delegations on this topic, it was noted that more information would be collected on the subject and the matter would be discussed at a later date.*

**Agenda Item No. 17**

**Vote of thanks.**

33. Before closing the meeting, the President offered vote of thanks recording the Board's sincere thanks and gratitude to H.E. Ms. Sabina Aliyeva, Commissioner for Human Rights, Republic of Azerbaijan for hosting the 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the AOA Board of Directors on 18 October 2022 at the beautiful city of Baku. The Board appreciated the excellent arrangements made for the meeting and the warm hospitality extended to the participants.

34. The Board also thanked the Government and the people of the Republic of Azerbaijan for their support to this event and hoped that the ombudsmanship will continue to grow in strength in the Republic of Azerbaijan and the region.