

ASIAN OMBUDSMAN ASSOCIATION
25th Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors
28 June 2024, Istanbul, Republic of Turkiye

MINUTES

The 25th annual meeting of the Board of Directors (BoD) of the Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA) was held on 28 June 2024 at Istanbul, Republic of Turkiye. The meeting was chaired by the President AOA, His Excellency Mr. Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi, Federal Ombudsman of Pakistan. Mr. Muhammad Safdar, Director General, Federal Ombudsman Secretariat, Islamabad in the absence of the Executive Secretary AOA, coordinated the meeting.

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

Sr. No.	Name	Position	Organization
1.	Mr. Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi	President	Federal Ombudsman, Pakistan.
2.	Ms. Sabina Aliyeva	Vice President	Commissioner for Human Rights, Republic of Azerbaijan.
3.	Mr. Chan Jick-chi, Jack	Secretary	The Ombudsman, Hong Kong, China.
4.	Mr. Justice Dr. Zabihullah Khodaeiyan,	Treasurer	President, General Inspection Organization, Islamic Republic of Iran.
5.	Mr. CHEN Long	Member	Represented National Commission of Supervision (NCS), China.
6.	Ms. Keiko KOSAKI	Member	Represented Administration Evaluation Bureau (AEB), Japan.
7.	Mr. Tae Kye KIM	Member	Vice Chairperson, Anti-corruption and Civil Rights Commission (ACRC), Republic of Korea.
8.	Ms. Saburskaya Sariya Kharisovna	Member	Commissioner for Human Rights, Republic of Tatarstan.
9.	Mr. Seref MALKOC	Member	Chief Ombudsman, Republic of Turkiye.
10.	Mr. Muhammad Safdar	Director General	Federal Ombudsman Secretariat, Islamabad.

Agenda Item No. 1

Remarks by the Chair and the Host

3. The meeting began with the opening remarks by the President AOA. He welcomed the participants to this family reunion since it met last on 11 September 2023 at Kazan (Republic of Tatarstan). He noted that some colleagues have completed their term of office or replaced with new colleagues during the period. The President thanked Mr. Seref Malkoc, Chief Ombudsman, Republic of Turkiye for hosting the Board meeting. He recognized with acclaim the services of Ms. Winnie Chiu, Former Director from Hong Kong, China and the Secretary AOA as well as Mr. Mokhammad Najih, Chairman, Ombudsman of Indonesia during their incumbency. The President welcomed Mr. Chan Jick-chi, Jack, the current Ombudsman of Hong Kong, China as the new Secretary of the Association. He also welcomed Ms. Saburskaya Sariya Kharisovna, Commissioner for Human Rights in Tatarstan for attending the meeting following her election as Director last year. The President offered condolences on the sad demise of the former President of Iran, Mr. Ibrahim Raisi in the air crash and paid tributes for his contribution as the founder member of AOA during the Association's formative years.

4. The President further stated that the current session marked the first substantive meeting of the Board of Directors which was elected on 11 September 2023 at Kazan. He said that the Board has important items on its agenda which would contribute positively to the growth and development of the Association. He thanked Mr. Seref Malkoc, Chief Ombudsman of Republic of Turkiye for hosting the meeting and invited him to deliver his welcoming remarks. Mr. Seref Malkoc, warmly welcomed the participants of the AOA meeting and reiterated his commitment to the goals and objectives of the Asian Ombudsman Association. He re-called his visit to the AOA Secretariat at Islamabad earlier this year and appreciated the good work being done by it. Mr. Seref Malkoc further stated that the Ombudsman Institution of Turkiye was making effective contribution towards improving the service quality of public administration, promotion of good governance, the rule of law and the human rights. He emphasized the need for human rights institution to consider the common problems of humanity and find collective solutions for improving the quality of life of the people.

5. Following the conclusion of the welcoming remarks by the Chief Ombudsman of Turkiye, the President asked Director General, Federal Ombudsman Secretariat, Islamabad to proceed with the agenda.

Agenda Item No. 2

Approval of the Agenda of the 25th Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors

6. The Director General gave a brief overview of the items on the draft agenda before the Board.
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 (24th) BoD Meeting (Kazan, 11 September 2023).

8. The draft minutes of the 24th Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Asian Ombudsman Association, held on 11 September, 2023 at Kazan (Republic of Tatarstan) were circulated among the esteemed members of the Board via email dated 28 September, 2023 for observations and feedback. In response, the observations received from the esteemed members were incorporated in the minutes, and thus, the final minutes were circulated via email dated 26 October, 2023. The AOA Secretariat has continued to follow up on various activities during 2023/24 in the light of the decisions taken by the esteemed Board of Directors. These minutes were submitted to the 25th meeting of the Board for formal confirmation.

Decision:

In the absence of any objection/observations, the minutes of the last (24th) Meeting of the Board of Directors were confirmed by the Board. It took note of the effective follow up on various activities by the AOA Secretariat during 2023/24 and concurred to place these minutes 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 on the Activities of the Association 2023/24

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 was presented by the President to the Board.

10. In his Report, the AOA President highlighted that 6 out of 9 objectives of the Association as listed in its Bye Laws provided for activities aimed at promoting professionalism in the discharge of the ombudsman functions. The steps taken by the Association in furtherance of its aims and objectives over the last 28 years have reinforced its credentials as an independent, non-political and a professional body of international character. The main focus of the AOA activities during 2023 and the first half of the 2024 has been on encouraging participation of member institutions through video links in the activities undertaken at the national level on subjects of professional interests. The AOA Secretariat in collaboration with the Federal Ombudsman Secretariat organized 04 Webinars on the themes of professional interest which were widely attended by the AOA membership.

11. Beginning from this year, the President's Report contained a separate document titled, "A Catalogue of Activities at the National Level" containing authentic record of activities, special projects, initiative and professional achievements of the member institutions at the national level. The said document was presented to the Board which is expected to facilitate the exchange of information, sharing of experiences and best practices as well as shall be a useful addition to the AOA Resource Centre.

Decision:

The Board approved the Report of the President for the year 2023/24 and appreciated the efforts of the President AOA and the Secretariat in carrying out the activities of the Association in an effective and professional manner. It took note of the AOA Secretariat's initiative to prepare a new document titled, "A Catalogue of Activities at the National Level", and requested member institutions to share information with the Secretariat about the activities, special projects, initiatives and professional achievements carried out at the national level for circulation and placement in the AOA Resource Centre. The Board concurred to place the Report before the General Assembly for approval under Article 6(4)(f) of the Bye Laws.

Agenda Item No. 5

Approval of the Audited Financial Statement of the AOA Accounts for the year 2023

12. The Audited Financial Statement for the year 2023 was prepared by M/s W.A. Associates in term of Article 6-5 of the Code of Conduct of Business. The Hon'ble Treasurer

Mr. Justice Dr. Zabihullah Khodaeiyan formally placed the Audited Statement before the Board in terms of Article 8(2) of Bye Laws of the AOA.

Decision:

The Board approved the Audited Statement for the year 2023 and gave its consent to place the same before the General Assembly for approval under Article 6(4)(f) of the Bye Laws of the AOA.

Agenda Item No.6

Status Report on:

i. AOA Resource Centre

13. The Board was apprised that the AOA Secretariat was vigorously pursuing the up-gradation of the Resource Centre. The Centre will serve as a storehouse of information and maintain authentic record about the growth, evolution and progress of the institution of ombudsman in the region. It shall contain documents (online as well as hardcopies). The Resource Centre facility at the AOA Secretariat shall be available on gratis basis to the researchers, scholars, institutions and professionals from the AOA member countries.

14. The Board was further apprised that the Secretariat has organized a series of Webinars on selected themes of professional interests open to all member institutions of AOA, OIC Ombudsman Association (OICOA) and the Forum of Pakistan Ombudsman (FPO) besides local professional and human rights bodies. In addition, the AOA President participated in the international conferences by video link held at Moscow and Tashkent. The AOA Secretariat, however, does not have proper professional equipment along with related technical accessories for organizing video conferencing, online meetings as well as participation in the such activities in other countries. Accordingly, the AOA Secretariat requested approval of the Board for estimated expenditure of USD 2764/- to purchase the necessary equipment.

Decision:

- i. The Board took note of the role of the Resource Centre as an instrument for promoting the objectives of the Association and commended the efforts of the AOA Secretariat to pursue its up-gradation;*
- ii. The Board encouraged the AOA members to actively contribute in the development of the Resource Centre;*

- iii. *Approved an amount of USD 2764/- for installation of video conferencing equipment in the AOA Secretariat and;*
- iv. *Gave its consent to place the matter before the General Assembly in terms of provision 4-1 of the Code of Conduct of Business of AOA.*

ii. Sharing of information/news items

15. The Board was informed that the AOA e-Newsletter was being issued on monthly basis since June 2018. It continues to enjoy overwhelming support from the member institutions and served as an effective vehicle for exchange of information and sharing of experiences within the region and beyond. It was emphasized that effective participation of the membership in sharing information/news items shall enrich the contents of the e-Newsletter.

Decision:

The Board appreciated the effectiveness of the e-Newsletter in promoting the objectives of the Association. It gave its consent to place the progress report before the General Assembly for its information and emphasis.

iii. Updating e-Profile Directory and the Alumni Directory

16. The Board was informed that the AOA Secretariat regularly updates the e-Profile Directory to incorporate changes, if any, in the profile of the head of institutions, focal persons or change in contact details. Active cooperation from the member institutions is necessary for maintaining an up-to-date record in the e-Profile Directory and the Alumni Directory.

Decision:

The Board took note of the status of e-Profile Directory and the Alumni Directory on the AOA website and encouraged the member institutions to regularly provide the requisite information to the AOA Secretariat. It gave its consent to place the matter before the General Assembly for information and emphasis.

Agenda Item No.7

AOA Calendar of Activities 2024

17. The Board was apprised that the 17th Meeting of the General Assembly (11 September 2023, Kazan) on the recommendation of the Board of Directors approved preparation of an Annual Calendar of Activities 2024 and called upon the AOA members to share information

with the AOA Secretariat concerning activities to be hosted by them at the national level with an option for online participation by other members. Accordingly, a number of activities were undertaken successfully by the member institutions during 2023 and the first half of 2024 which were described in detail in the President's Report under Agenda Item No.4.

18. The Board noted that the first half of the year 2024 was since over, the members may identify and offer activities to be hosted during the second half of 2024 and in 2025 at the national level with an option for online participation by other members. In this context, the Board considered a proposal to hold International Symposium on Ombudsmanship and the Citizen's Rights for which the expenditure shall be met jointly from the resources available with the Federal Ombudsman Secretariat Pakistan as well as the AOA Secretariat. The said symposium shall bring together ombudsman institutions from the Asian region and beyond. It will initiate a dialogue on enhancing their capacity to operate in accordance with international standards for establishing and maintaining effective ombudsman institutions worldwide. The symposium shall also provide an opportunity to highlight the role of ombudsmanship in realizing the goals of the UN Development Agenda 2030.

Decision:

- i. *The Board encouraged the AOA membership to offer activities/events aimed at promoting mutual cooperation at the national level with an option for online participation by other members during the second half of 2024 and in 2025;*
- ii. *The Board approved the holding of International Symposium on Ombudsmanship and the Citizen's Rights by the AOA Secretariat in cooperation with the Federal Ombudsman of Pakistan in October/November 2024 at Islamabad;*
- iii. *It approved in principle sharing of expenditure with the host institution up to an estimated amount of USD 10,000/- to be met from the AOA budget. This expenditure will be authorized by the President subject to submission of necessary documents/invoices and;*
- iv. *Gave its consent to place the matter before the General Assembly for its notice and emphasis in terms of provision of 4-1 of the Code of Conduct of Business.*

Agenda Item No.8

National Baseline Assessment (NBA) on Business and Human Rights: Sharing Azerbaijan's experience

19. In June 2011, the United Nations adopted the Guiding Principles (UNGPs) on Business and Human Rights, involving the state duty to protect human rights, the corporate responsibility to respect human rights and access to effective remedy for victims of business related abuses. Azerbaijan has accordingly developed a National Action Plan on the subject recognizing the growing influence of corporate activities of human lives and communities. A special presentation on Azerbaijan's experience was arranged with a view to promoting responsible business conduct and human rights across Asia. The side event was also organized on the subject after the meeting wherein UN representatives participated.

Decision:

The Board appreciated the initiative of Commissioner for Human Rights, Republic of Azerbaijan in sharing their experience in the field of business and human rights and encouraged the said office to organize awareness raising events on the subject as part of the AOA Calendar of Activities 2024. It gave its consent to place the matter before the General Assembly for information in terms of provision 4-1 of the Code of Conduct of Business of AOA.

Agenda Item No. 9

Consideration of dates and venue for meetings of the 26th BoD and 18th General Assembly in 2025

20. The General Assembly in its 17th meeting (11 September 2023, Kazan) has unanimously approved the proposal of the National Commission of Supervision (NCS), the People's Republic of China to host the 26th meeting of the Board of Directors and the 18th General Assembly meeting in 2025. The representative of the National Commission of Supervision reiterated the said invitation and added that it was looking forward to welcome the AOA members in China for the BoD and the General Assembly meetings in 2025.

Decision:

The Board directed the AOA Secretariat to coordinate with the host institution precise dates and venue for the above mentioned meetings.

Agenda Item No. 10

Any other item

21. The Office of The Ombudsman, Hong Kong, China would host for the first time an International Ombudsman Summit 2024 and Hong Kong Ombudsman 35th Anniversary Reception on 3 December 2024 at the Hong Kong Palace Museum. An array of colourful social and art and culture programme would also be arranged on 2 and 4 December for all participants free of charge. Mr. Chan Jick-chi, Jack, the Ombudsman of Hong Kong, China cordially invited all AOA members to join these celebration activities. Formal invitations and further details would soon be issued.

Agenda Item No. 11

Vote of thanks

22. H.E. Ms. Sabina Aliyeva, Commissioner of Human Rights, Republic of Azerbaijan spoke on behalf of the members of the Board to convey the deep appreciation and gratitude to Mr. Seref Malkoc, Chief Ombudsman of Turkiye for hosting the 25th meeting of the Board of Directors at Istanbul. She paid tributes to the host institution, the leadership of the Republic of Turkiye and its people for extending warm hospitality and making excellent arrangements for the meeting. She also thanked the Hon'ble Governor of Istanbul Mr. Davut GUL for receiving the BOD members and sharing with them his vision for realizing the core values of ombudsmanship. Heads of delegations from Japan, Republic of Korea and Republic of Tatarstan also took the floor on this agenda item and endorsed the above sentiments.
