



Asian Ombudsman Association

**Promoting Ombudsmanship in Asia
and Beyond**

From the President's Desk

It gives me great pleasure to present the booklet titled “Asian Ombudsman Association: Promoting Ombudsmanship in Asia and Beyond”. The booklet briefly traces the evolution of AOA since its inception in 1996 and highlights major activities for strengthening cooperation and developing professionalism aimed at promoting ombudsmanship. It is a matter of immense satisfaction, that within a short span of time, the Association has acquired a sound international character with its outreach extending beyond Asia. The AOA draws strength from its members who enrich its professional credentials through sharing of knowledge, experiences and best practices. The platform provided by AOA's periodic meetings and interactions serves as an important avenue for catalyzing the role of ombudsmanship in Asia.

Given the development challenges of the 21st century, good governance and public sector performance have acquired an important dimension. The UN Development Agenda 2030's aspiration is to “Leave No One Behind” in the development processes, which makes efficient service delivery and good administration important pre-requisites. The AOA, on its part, remains committed to promoting conducive environment for good governance through professionalism and ombudsmanship. As the journey towards the attainment of this vision proceeds, AOA's membership has continued to expand contributing to the Association's envisaged goals.

It is in the above backdrop that I regard the collective responsibility of the AOA members critical in making the Association stronger and vibrant through well- conceived and result-oriented activities. The initiatives taken in the past are indeed valuable and we must build upon those steps for achieving the AOA's objectives. I am confident that the booklet in hand shall be of great value to its readers. It holds a promise for the AOA members to working together in pursuit of the core values of ombudsmanship. For non-members, it offers an inspiration to join the Asian regional fraternity for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, good governance and respect for the rule of law in our societies.

I look forward to your support and guidance in pursuit of the goals and objectives of AOA for the collective good of the Asian fraternity.

(Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi)

Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA)

- Promoting Ombudsmanship in Asia and Beyond

Today, Ombudsmanship is an essential feature of every modern democratic society. It is being practiced and pursued across the globe as an effective mechanism for the promotion and protection of human rights, good governance and the rule of law.

The structure, scope and powers of ombudsman vary from one society to another and are directly related to the larger social, political, and legal systems being followed in that country. However, typically the duties of ombudsman include investigation and resolution of complaints against maladministration, discrimination, violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms and administrative excesses by the government agencies. Addressing issues of maladministration and protection of human rights is linked with good governance and at the heart of it lies accountability and justice.

Making of the Asian Fraternity

Regional arrangements of ombudsman institutions in Europe, Australia and Pacific, Latin America and Africa were already in place when the most populous region Asia conceived of a similar arrangement for Asia. In 1995, during the meeting of the Board of Directors of International Ombudsman Institute (IOI), it was agreed that Asia should also organize a regional body of its ombudsman institutions. The then Federal Ombudsman of Pakistan with the support of China and other like-minded countries initiated preparations and the First Asian Ombudsman Conference was convened on 15-16 April 1996 at Islamabad.



Heads of Delegations to the historical first Asian Ombudsman Conference, Islamabad with Mohtrama Benazir Bhutto, Prime Minister, Islamic Republic of Pakistan.



Family photo of delegations who witnessed formation of the AOA with Mr. Farooq Ahmed Khan Leghari, President, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 15-16 April 1996, Islamabad

Forty delegates from Asia attended the first Conference and founded the Asian Ombudsman Association on 16 April 1996. A preparatory committee with the Federal Ombudsman of Pakistan as its convenor and members from China, Iran, Hong Kong, Korea and Sri Lanka, was formed to work out necessary details including developing the basic documents of the Association. Its Bye-Laws were adopted during the third Asian Ombudsman Conference held on 3-8 May 1998 at Macau. The Association's Code of Conduct of Business was adopted during the 7th General Assembly Meeting on 24 May 2002 at Beijing. In recognition of Pakistan's contribution and the services for the cause of ombudsmanship, the Permanent Secretariat of AOA was established within the premises of the Federal Ombudsman Secretariat at Islamabad. Likewise, the Federal Ombudsman of Pakistan was elected as the first President by the Board of Directors in 1998 and was re-elected for the subsequent terms.

AOA Objectives

In terms of Article 4 of the Bye-Laws, the Association is an independent, non-political, democratic and professional body. Its objectives include:

- (a) To promote the concepts of Ombudsmanship and to encourage its development in Asia.
- (b) To develop professionalism in the discharge of the functions of an Ombudsman.
- (c) To encourage and support study and research regarding the institution of Ombudsman.
- (d) To sponsor training and educational programmes for the institutions of Ombudsman in the region.
- (e) To provide scholarships, fellowships, grants and other types of financial support to individuals for study relating to the institution of the Ombudsman.
- (f) To collect, store and disseminate information and research data about the institution of Ombudsman.
- (g) To facilitate exchange of information and experiences among the Ombudsman in the region.
- (h) To plan, arrange and supervise periodic conferences of the Ombudsmen of the Asian countries/regions.
- (i) To undertake such other matters necessary to further the above objectives of the Association.

Governance Structure

The AOA is registered in Pakistan under the Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies (Registration and Control) Ordinance 1961. Its operations are governed and guided by the Association's Bye-Laws and the Code of Conduct of Business (placed at www.asianombudsman.com).

General Assembly

The General Assembly consists of the Full Members and meets once every two years. It has the right to:

- (a) accept full membership;
- (b) elect the members of the Board of Directors and an Auditor;
- (c) fix the membership dues;
- (d) pass amendments in the statute;
- (e) confer special honours on deserving persons; and
- (f) approve reports of the Board of Directors and the Auditor.

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors comprises the President, the Vice President, the Secretary, the Treasurer and five other members elected by the General Assembly for a term of four years. The Board meets once every year and considers all matters in furtherance of the objectives of the Association including financial, as set out in the Bye-Laws of the Association. The Board can also decide matters of urgent nature by circulation.

AOA in Action

The steps taken by the Association over the past 27 years in pursuit of its goals and objectives has laid strong foundations for its continued growth as an effective platform of the ombudsman fraternity in the region. In this regard, the following activities, both ongoing and the proposed, demonstrate the commitment of the AOA membership to promote ombudsmanship in Asia, develop professionalism, sponsor training, encourage R&D, collect, store and disseminate information, arrange periodic conferences and project its goalposts for the future:

- i) Twenty three meetings of the Association's Board of Directors and sixteen meetings of the General Assembly have been held so far. This reflects the commitment of its members to strengthen their cooperation in pursuit of common goals and values.
- ii) Sixteen international Conferences were organized at different capitals on various themes of professional interest.
- iii) Association's accounts are audited annually.
- iv) Regular elections of the AOA Board of Directors and its office bearers reflect its strong democratic credentials.
- v) Monthly e-Newsletter is being issued since June 2018 for exchange of information of professional interest and best practices. This has proved itself as a very useful forum for mutual cooperation and sharing of experiences.
- vi) A short documentary titled, "AOA-Promoting Ombudsmanship in Asia and Beyond" and a booklet on the vision, scope and work of AOA was prepared to enhance public awareness and promote understanding about ombudsmanship.
- vii) Training sessions, seminars and webinars were held on specific subjects having a bearing on the work of the member institutions.
- viii) E-Profile Directory of the AOA and the Alumni members provides ever ready database of the member institutions for their closer interaction and promotion of coordination.
- ix) AOA Resource Center is being upgraded. The facility will serve as a store house of information and material about the growth, evolution and

progress of ombudsmanship in the Asian Region. This facility will be available on gratis basis to researchers, scholars, institutions and professionals from the AOA member countries.

- x) Calendar of activities is developed to pursue the objectives of the Association in a professional manner.
- xi) AOA Secretariat is funded from within the budgetary resources of the Federal Ombudsman of Pakistan. It is headed by a senior Ambassador with vast experience in the diplomatic service of Pakistan and various international organizations. He is working without any monthly salary or remuneration.

International Cooperation and AOA

Today, Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA) is a major non-political, independent, democratic and professional body of international character representing more than two thirds of the world population. It has traversed a long way since its inception which is reflected in continued expansion of its membership and a range of well thought out activities to promote professionalism and mutual cooperation amongst the ombudsman institutions.

The United Nations General Assembly Resolution No.A/RES/77/224 of 15 December 2022, adopted by a unanimous vote of 193 member states, acknowledges the important role that the Ombudsman and mediator institutions can play in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, promoting good governance and respect for the rule of law. It duly stresses the importance of international cooperation between ombudsman offices and recognises the role played by regional and international associations in promoting cooperation and sharing best practices.

The said Resolution notes with satisfaction the continuing work of the global network of ombudsmen, the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) and close cooperation with active regional ombudsman and mediator associations including the Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA) among other regional bodies. It strongly encourages member states to share and exchange best practices on the work and functioning of their ombudsman institutions with other regional networks and associations.

Enhancing Geographical Outreach

The AOA is well endowed in terms of rich experience of its members in ombudsmanship at the national level. It is uniquely placed as the AOA enjoys overlapping membership with other ombudsman platforms such as the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI), the OIC Ombudsman Association (OICOA) and the Forum of Pakistan Ombudsman (FPO). Currently, the vast majority of the Asian region of IOI comes from the AOA representing 32 members. The AOA membership includes 17 members from the OICOA and 14 members

from the FPO. One of the AOA member is part of the Australasia and the Pacific region of IOI while five AOA members are represented in the European region of IOI. The overlapping membership of the above ombudsman platforms offers a unique source of strength for any undertaking by them at the bilateral or multilateral levels. These bodies constitute a global fraternity striving to achieve the ultimate goals of good governance through improving service delivery of government agencies, respect for the rule of law and expeditious relief to the aggrieved citizens.

Efforts are in hand to expand the Association's membership in order to enhance its representative character, outreach, stature, and add value to its professional pursuits.

AOA Membership

The AOA comprises Full Members, Associate Members, Honorary Life Members and Individual Members. The complete list of membership is available on the AOA website. The procedure of applying for AOA membership is very simple.

Step 1

Determine which type of membership you wish to apply for (i.e. for Full Membership, Associate Membership or Individual Membership).

Full Membership

A person holding the office of Ombudsman, Parliamentary Commissioner, Minister of Supervision, Commissioner for Administrative Complaints or the head of any office or organisation known by any designation who has been appointed or elected according to the constitution or law of the country/region and whose role includes the following characteristics, may apply for the full membership.

- (a) to investigate the grievance of any person or body of persons concerning any decision or recommendation made or any act committed or omitted by any administrative authority over which his jurisdiction exists;
- (b) to make recommendations to authorities under the jurisdiction;
- (c) to discharge functions independent of the organization over which jurisdiction is held; and
- (d) to report to the Head of State, Government or the Legislature the results of activities or on any matter arising from an investigation.

Associate Members

Persons or the Heads of agencies interested in or involved in Ombudsman-related activities who do not qualify as Full Members (for example, heads of universities, hospitals, prisons and the press etc.) may join as Associate Members.

Individual Members

The Association may allow any individual to become a member who has shown interest through writings, research or otherwise on the concept of ombudsmanship and whose membership shall advance the objectives of the Association.

Step 2

Fill out the Application Form which can be downloaded from the Association's website where the Bye-Laws and Code of Conduct of the Association are also available.

The AOA Secretariat will process all applications for full membership received before the next meeting of Board of Directors. Cases of all eligible applicants shall be placed before the Executive Committee comprising the President, the Vice President and the Secretary. The Committee's recommendations are submitted to the Board of Directors for consideration and appropriate recommendation for a decision by the General Assembly.

Step 3

Submit the completed form along with application processing fee of US\$250 (Full Membership), US\$150 (Associate Membership) and US\$100 (Individual Membership) payable through a demand draft in favour of the 'Asian Ombudsman Association' or through bank wire to:

Account No. : 0597-1202-0000-98-7
Bank : MCB Bank Ltd.
Branch : Aabpara Market,
Islamabad, Pakistan
Swift Code : MUCBPKKAA

Annual Membership Fee:

Full Member	:	US\$1000/-
Associate Member	:	US\$150/-
Individual Member	:	US\$100/-

Contact Details

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