

President's Closing Remarks (8th December, 2022)



Dear AAS Members,

On 10th December, 2022, my term as President of Advocates Association of Sarawak, (2020-2022) will end.

When I first undertook the task to be the President of AAS in 2020, the landscape of the Association was, to a certain degree, a distinct embodiment of operation based on the person holding the office. I did not inherit an existing system to manage the AAS as all the past Presidents adopted different ways to manage the AAS during their term(s). Similarly, the past recordings and safekeeping of secretariat files and correspondences in place were inadequate. My immediate action upon taking office was to formulate a standard system of administration for the AAS – as this would enable all future Presidents a head start when such President takes over the office. During my term, the Secretariat had also set up a system to manage and disseminate information and/or notices to keep all members informed of all events and issues in our practice as advocates.

Then, I had immediately extended my hand to all 4 branches to listen to their views and differences. As the President of AAS and notwithstanding the original support platform that I came from, I am the President of AAS to ALL advocates in Sarawak. The conclusion from my discussions with the branches, the fragmentation between the Branches at the time were due to these three-fold issues:-

1. Different mandate on the move of our Association to a Statutory Body.
2. Call of the admission of the two previous Chief Judge of Sabah and Sarawak to the Rolls of Advocates in Sarawak.
3. The administrative running of the AAS, which includes Central Committee's decisions making structure.

These factors contributed to the stalemate especially in securing a uniform and coherent model especially the move of AAS to become a Statutory Body. Representing all advocates in Sarawak, I am not able to move and favour the position proposed by Kuching Branch of 1 person 1 vote direct election of President, when the other 3 branches in Bintulu, Miri and Sibul favor a Statutory Body based on present delegates system (or a vice-versa stand), whereby such delegates system has prevailed since the establishment of the AAS. I must note that the proposed mode of 1 person 1 vote differs significantly from the existing Ordinance. Despite all the attempts to mediate among all the 4 branches, there was no unified consensus between the branches. I did not push for the formation of a Statutory Body. I took the position that if we can put the issue of Statutory Body aside, all the branches can work together. Hence, I have worked hard to bring all parties together.

During my term, a system was set on vetting of Admission/Ad-Hoc Petitions. In retrospect, in my 6 years in the Central Committee (as Committee Member, Vice President and



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Honorary Treasurer) prior to my term as President, I was not part of the decision maker of the admission/ad-hoc petitions. In fact, most past Presidents had their own individual styles in vetting such petitions. During my term, I implemented a system where all admission and ad-hoc petitions were emailed to all Central Committee members first and to be vetted later by all the 4 Vice Presidents and myself who then make a collective decision, following which, this decision on each petition was then endorsed by the Central Committee. Every member would have a say in the decision in the admission and ad hoc petition – as this is the way the AAS should operate.

During my term, all decision making were through consultations by majority decision. AAS is not a one person team and the decision of the President has to be mandated by the Central Committee.

I report that during my term, all the 4 Branches' Chairmen, the appointed executive committees of the 4 Branches in Central Committee plus members of the 4 Branches Committee had worked together, co-operated, shared the workload and assisted Central Committee tremendously in the functioning of AAS to serve our members. Our Central Committee hold out a harmonious relationship which contributed greatly to the effective operation of AAS. Unity will steer AAS to function to serve as ***One United Team One United Voice***.

The running of the office of AAS these 2 years could not have been made possible without the contributions and support from all the committees to the office. From the day when I first took office, I had set-up various sub-committees and the Heads of such sub-committee were appointed from all the representatives of the 4 Branches. I am grateful to my fellow committees, my hardworking Secretariat, Mr. David Teo and Ms. Christine Lim, my four (4) Vice Presidents, Mr. Sarbjit Singh, Mr. Gurvir Singh, Mr. Tonny Hii and Mr. Ma Seong Yui and special thanks to Ms. Jacquelyn Hii, Head of Court Practice (Civil) Sub-Committee, Mr. Desmond Sahathevan as Head of Practice & Etiquette and Advocacy Training Courses, Ms. Christine Lim, Head of Young Lawyers Group (YBGK, Legal Aid, Law Awareness) Sub-Committee and Mr. David Teo as Manager of PMC-19, for their relentless hard work, dedications and efforts had made it possible to accomplish the challenging task of running the Association. I am also deeply appreciative of the support from all the members advocate in Sarawak who had contributed and assisted me and the various Sub-Committees during my term.

I had worked towards a strong united AAS. I would have wished AAS could move to the Statutory Body based on the current delegates system with the President by rotation among the 4 branches and the Secretary and Treasurer to be appointed by the President. I had failed to lead AAS to a Statutory Body and I extend my apology. I will not be seeking re-election and will pass the torch to the next President to usher AAS to a new level and milestone.



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Throughout the web of any successful association, one golden thread is always to be seen, and that is the pivotal role that unity plays. For it is through unity that one derives strength and power. Unity is, after all, the key to success in the domain of any respectable association. The AAS is no exception to such sentiment. **Martin Luther King JR** said it this way, "*We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools*".

I wish the new team of AAS will continue to practise and uphold unity among all branches of AAS despite differences to continue building up a powerful, purposeful and functional association to be the representative of all the members of AAS.

"Ubi concordia, ibi Victoria (Where there is unity, there is the victory)"! Go AAS!

Thank you & Regards,

Antonio Sim

President

The Advocates Association of Sarawak

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