



General Assembly

Fifty-eighth session

44th plenary meeting

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Official Records

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte (Saint Lucia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Lamba (Malawi), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda items 55 and 57 to 59 (continued)

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

United Nations reform: measures and proposals

Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields

Strengthening of the United Nations system

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/57/786, A/58/175, A/58/351, A/58/382, A/58/395 and A/58/395/Corr.1)

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): In his address at the beginning of this session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General underscored the importance of collective action in addressing global challenges. He also emphasized the need for the effective functioning of major organs of the United Nations and the relationship between them. We fully agree with the Secretary-General on that. The participation of the Deputy Secretary-General in this debate reflects the importance that the Office of the Secretary-General attaches to the work of the General Assembly and to this debate.

As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement and of the Group of 77 and China, and indeed in our national capacity, we attach great importance to the issues under discussion. In that connection, we welcome the President's readiness to take the lead in implementing the various resolutions concerning revitalization of the General Assembly. Beginning with the forty-sixth session, we have made considerable progress, but the changes on the international scene dictate that we should continue to revitalize the General Assembly and to strengthen the system as a whole.

In the President's informal note on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, he proposed that consideration of such revitalization be clustered under "Enhancing the authority and role of the General Assembly" and "Improving the working methods of the General Assembly". Much has been accomplished in the latter category. Therefore, for the purpose of today's debate, I shall confine my brief remarks to a number of aspects of enhancing the authority and role of the General Assembly. I shall do so because the current international situation demands an authoritative General Assembly that commands respect and legitimacy worldwide.

The President has made available to the Assembly a compilation that indicates the road we have travelled and how far we still have to go in implementing the decisions we have taken here. Perhaps we must pause and ask ourselves why resolutions of the General Assembly are not

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implemented by its own members, whereas those of the Security Council are, with the exception of a few cases, in which some members tend to ignore them. That then prompts us to ask whether we can earnestly enhance the work of the General Assembly without looking seriously once again at the United Nations Charter.

For example, while the Security Council has the primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security, the General Assembly can also play an effective role. As we have it now, conflict situations are confined to the Security Council. Important issues are brought to the General Assembly when the Council fails to act. We propose that major international conflict situations be considered first in plenary meeting, after which the Security Council should meet, having benefited from the views of the general membership. That, in our view, would not contradict Article 10 of the Charter.

The general debate is highly valued by Member States. Hence, participation at the highest level has been on the increase; it gives Member States an opportunity to pronounce on many issues of national or international importance. The focusing of each meeting of the general debate might develop into small high-level meetings or special sessions. That needs to be given some serious thought before it is put into practice.

The voluntary 15-minute limit on statements has, no doubt, shortened the general debate. However, displaying the lights is perhaps less courteous to the speaker. Our suggestion is that the lights be displayed only to the speaker.

My delegation has always wondered what determines the tenure of various United Nations bodies. For example, members are elected to the Economic and Social Council for three years, and non-permanent Security Council members serve for two years on the Council, while the President of the General Assembly is elected for 12 months. Having served on the Security Council, I can say from experience that, for non-permanent members, the first six months are for learning the ropes. Thus it is during the second half of the year that one begins to comprehend fully the workings of the Council and thus to make a meaningful contribution.

The point I am making is that there is a gap between the assumption of office and making an impact as far as the tenure of the office of the President

of the General Assembly is concerned. For example, resolutions adopted under the current presidency will reach Member States around February. That leaves an implementation period of about six months for Member States, after which the Secretary-General will request information on implementation from Member States in order to compile his reports to the General Assembly. And so the cycle continues. The biennialization of items will assist in ensuring that effective action will be taken. However, that must be done with the understanding of the countries concerned.

Every year, during the general debate, the President of the General Assembly is congratulated on having assumed his or her high office. But what are the working conditions of that office? As a country that has had the rare honour of presiding over the General Assembly, our experience shows that we, the Member States, must adequately equip the President's office if it is to meet the demands placed upon it. Resources from the regular budget must be made available to the office, and the onus must not be left on the country assuming the presidency. The institutional memory must be extended to the substantive issues, discussions and recommendations of General Assembly sessions.

Most of the former presidents of the General Assembly have served for many years at the United Nations. Others, upon their return home, have assumed higher posts in their countries. Individually and collectively, with their international status, they bring to the table vast knowledge and experience on issues in the international arena. They certainly can play an important role as facilitators. In our view, the former presidents of the General Assembly should be engaged in leading working groups of the Assembly and should serve on panels or committees to look into specific subjects upon which the General Assembly might decide. That would not only elevate the office but also contribute to raising awareness of the work and the authority of the General Assembly.

In closing, let me say a word about the Fourth Committee. It is through the Fourth Committee that many of our countries were decolonized, and, as a result, we are Members of this great Organization. The Committee needs to be strengthened by reviewing, *inter alia*, progress being made with regard to the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

Mr. Al-Awadi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation would like to align itself fully with the

statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Mr. President, my delegation would like to extend its thanks for the distinguished efforts you have made and for your insistence on and interest in the issue of enhancing the General Assembly and rationalizing and reforming its work. The unofficial NAM paper, which you have presented and which was discussed in informal consultations on 17 October 2003, is a clear proof of your intention to bring about a positive conclusion to the issue of rationalizing and reforming the work of the General Assembly and enhancing its role, thus complementing what your predecessors have done in previous sessions. Kuwait believes that the NAM paper presented by you, Mr. President, last week contained many practical proposals for improving the working methods of the General Assembly. We can, therefore, refer to it and be guided by it through the next phase in order to reach consensus on the largest possible number of proposals contained in it.

Kuwait, through its Permanent Mission here, has given special importance to the issue of rationalization and reform of the work of the General Assembly because the results would be a reflection, in the end, of our performance at this important organ of the United Nations. We believe that it is important to present our remarks on this issue, which concern the general principles that should guide us during the reform process. We will thus present proposals on procedures that we believe will bring about the desired objectives of this process.

It is essential that we use the present positive momentum to achieve some noticeable progress in the rationalization process of the work of the General Assembly, in accordance with general principles that will be a guide for Member States, for subsequent Presidents of the General Assembly and for the Secretariat in the implementation of any steps in this area.

My delegation has noted that the reform process comes up every year associated with specific ideas, enthusiasm or keenness, but without setting up guiding principles that should be applied at the beginning of every session. We should not repeat ourselves concerning this issue at every session. Our objective in setting up such principles is to protect the political interests of any party interested in this process.

The general principles and proposals concerning work procedures according to which we should work in the next meeting are as follow:

First, we must agree on the principle of continuity in the reform and rationalization of procedures, so that the reform process is not limited to a specific session or a specific presidency but will continue, whether the results are positive or negative, even if we have not reached agreement on a specific area of rationalization and reform.

Secondly, agreement on the process of rationalization and reform of the working methods of the General Assembly is not only related to technical matters. It is also related to sensitive political matters and, accordingly, political dimensions should be taken into account. We repeat what we said in our statement at the last session on the need to take into account the political nature of the work of the United Nations, which means that we will not follow the procedures used in private sector institutions.

Thirdly, the reform process should be fully transparent and all States should have the right to know about all proposals. These proposals should be presented in a fair and equal manner, taking into account the ideas of small States and small delegations, which have difficulty following the sessions of the General Assembly and its many committees because of their frequency and the fact that they are held at the same time as other meetings.

We call upon the President of the General Assembly, his successors and the Secretariat to follow closely the ideas of Member States and to help us crystallize all the ideas agreed upon in the area of reform of the General Assembly, particularly proposals concerning working methods and procedures. These proposals should be submitted and adopted without delay, so that they will not be superseded by other proposals and procedures that are not yet agreed upon.

My delegation believes that one of the most important procedural changes that the General Assembly has started to implement is the clustering of similar items for debate. We call for the continuation of this clustering approach, particularly when discussing items in the General Assembly.

Concerning rationalization of the agenda items of the General Assembly by biennializing or triennializing certain ones or cancelling them, this method is a bit

sensitive but can be implemented if we take into account the political aspects of those issues. In this context, the most important thing is consultation in two phases. First, the secretariat of the General Assembly would, each year before starting the regular session of the General Assembly, consult with States or with specific States concerning a specific item that could be postponed to a coming session or a procedure that could be adopted that would rationalize the method. The secretariat, after completing the consultation process, would then submit a paper through the President of the General Assembly that would indicate the items on which agreement had been reached with the parties concerned, to rationalize those items. We emphasize here two principles: the method of consultation and the agreement of the States parties to a particular item.

My delegation supports the proposal by the President of the General Assembly to concentrate general discussion at the beginning of the session on a specific issue or theme; this approach has been successfully used by the Non-Aligned Movement in its recent conferences and summits. My delegation has studied the proposal made by the President of the General Assembly concerning scheduling the discussion of the items of the General Assembly and agrees that it is an important proposal and will alleviate the burden of many countries with small delegations if it is done in an accurate and solid manner. We call for scheduling the meetings of the Main Committees of the General Assembly throughout the year so that the meeting of a particular Committee could be held in one month every year or during a specific period, in accordance with the traditional method followed at the inauguration of every session, holding the general debate in the month of September.

My delegation supports the proposal of strengthening the capabilities and potentials of the Office of the President of the General Assembly. We also support what was contained in the statement of the NAM representative in this connection. We could also establish a specific unit in the Secretariat whose staff would help the President of the General Assembly during each session.

In conclusion, Mr. President, my delegation would like to emphasize that the general framework proposed in your paper must concentrate on procedures and on improving working methods, because this is the only way to attain the principal objective of this

process, which is to enhance the role of the General Assembly and to revitalize its role in accordance with the Charter. My delegation will cooperate fully with you to safeguard the success of your efforts. I would like to express my thanks to Ambassador Abdallah Baali, the representative of Algeria, for his efforts to coordinate the positions of the NAM States.

Mr. Motomura (Japan): The changes that we see today in the international community are frequent and increasingly more dynamic. Every day we face new and diverse challenges. As the advancement of globalization has led us to an increasingly more interdependent world, we cannot fail to recognise the effectiveness of a viable multilateral framework in taking on these challenges. The United Nations, we believe, is the best tool available to the international community.

The relevance of this tool, however, depends entirely on its ability to effectively deliver its message to the real world. That is especially true with regard to the ability of the General Assembly to make its opinions heard, as it is the most representative body within the United Nations in that it comprises all the Member States. The General Assembly should also play a key role when the international community takes decisions following legitimate avenues for action. It is against that background that I wish to stress how important it is for us to seriously seek ways and means to let the General Assembly recover the status that the Charter grants it and the role that the Millennium Declaration clearly assigns to it.

In addition, the United Nations must enhance its ability to respond to shifting priorities. The Member States must constantly reassess whether we are meeting with success in devoting our time, energy and resources to our highest priorities so as to produce maximum yield within the given limitations.

First, let me touch upon some of the matters related to the revitalization of the General Assembly that we consider to be of particular importance. This matter actually has been on our agenda since 1990 and we have engaged in numerous discussions from a variety of perspectives. I believe that it is high time for us to take stock of the results of those discussions and to come up with a more comprehensive approach to this matter. In this regard, I would like to pay tribute to the initiatives that the President of the General Assembly is undertaking.

Today, we are here to discuss four agenda items in this joint debate. This is quite a symbolic step forward in our effort to enhance the efficiency of our work by clustering related items. I also would like to commend the efforts made by the President in that direction.

As concerns measures to enhance the authority and role of the General Assembly, we are in favour of strengthening the Office of the President. In order to ensure a smooth transfer and to accumulate institutional memory, the Secretariat should assign one or two persons from among its current staff members to the Office. In our view, it is preferable that an expert with solid knowledge of the substance and precedence of the work of the General Assembly be assigned.

This year, we elected the President in June, which is a remarkable step forward, but three months is still quite short a period in which to fully prepare oneself for that important job and one year is still a very short time frame for the completion of a great deal of substantive work. We therefore propose that we consider the possibility of re-electing the President, as well as the possibility of electing the President from among the Vice-Presidents of the previous year. We are also of the view that the President should further enhance coordination with representatives of other relevant bodies, such as the Main Committees, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Secretary-General's Office and the regional groups.

The General Assembly should also explore ways to enhance cooperation with the Security Council through the promotion of dialogue with it. In order to realize that, however, it is necessary for us to make our discussions in the General Assembly more interactive and more focused. We must therefore direct our attention to consideration of measures to improve the working methods of the General Assembly.

The need to further rationalize the agendas of both the plenary and the Main Committees has been repeatedly stressed in our discussion. It might be worth giving serious consideration to the introduction of a rule that would enable us to streamline and consolidate agenda items as well as resolutions. For instance, those agenda items concerning which discussion is deferred for a number of years should be deleted from the list. We should also take a hard look at the way in which agenda items are allocated to each Main Committee,

for there must be significant room for rationalization in this area.

In the context of agenda reform, I have been paying particular attention to the work of the Second Committee, which, on the basis of resolution 57/270 B, is to reach a conclusion on this topic by the end of the fifty-eighth session. I have already underscored the stagnant nature of the work of the Second Committee in the statement I delivered before the Committee on 6 October.

The role of the Second Committee is becoming more and more important. In the economic, social and related fields, the discussions are often left stranded amid ideological confrontations among groups, without allowing participants even to reach a common understanding of the priorities of their work. In order to produce concrete and positive results, all the countries that take part in those forums must increase their efforts to reconcile their positions and work together.

Resolution 57/301 provides that the regular session will commence in the third week of September, which results in a considerable time squeeze for discussions in the Main Committees. The Third Committee, for example, has to deal with as many as 80 draft resolutions in seven weeks, which is one week less than is allotted in a normal year. I call for the Member States to review this situation and to be flexible enough to return to the previous practice. Another matter for consideration is the possibility of dispersing sessions of the Main Committees, which are currently concentrated in the period from October to December, throughout the year, as was proposed by the Permanent Representative of Singapore, which action we support.

Now I would like to turn to the issues related to the reform and strengthening of the United Nations. We are glad to note that, since the General Assembly adopted resolution 57/300, those actions stipulated in it are being steadily implemented, as is indicated in the Secretary-General's report in document A/58/351.

In the draft programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005, the Secretary-General pays particular attention to resource reallocation and proposes to terminate 912 outputs. While commending his efforts, we call for a smaller and more rationalized budget through more strict prioritization of activities and further redeployment of resources away from more

obsolete activities in order to produce maximum output within our limited financial resources.

We also appreciate the concrete initiatives taken since last year with respect to the restructuring of the Department of Public Information and measures implemented for the enhanced effectiveness of the Department's information products and activities, including the promotion of strategic communications services. I would like to encourage the Secretary-General to continue these reforms in accordance with the relevant resolutions and decisions already adopted concerning public information.

In one respect, reform is the accumulation of concrete, operational measures. Sometimes it involves our everyday behaviours. We, the delegation members, are by no means free from blame; above all, we must not waste our precious resources. For instance, if we start a meeting later than the scheduled time, the interpreters can only stand by idle during that time, and still we are paying them a considerable amount of money. As one hour of meeting time with interpretation in six languages and support services costs \$1,875, 20 minutes of delay wastes \$625. Supposing we had 10 meetings in the morning and another 10 in the afternoon, all delayed for an average of 20 minutes, we would lose \$12,500 a day. If we have 22 working days in a month, the loss amounts to \$275,000. We could easily end up wasting \$1 million if we went on like that for four months. Hypothetical though this may be, it clearly indicates the critical importance and urgent need of being punctual ourselves if we wish to demonstrate financial accountability for the further promotion of reform.

In another respect, the reform process should take into account more long-term, strategic perspectives. This question relates to how we construct and maintain durable multilateral frameworks with which we can tackle the real problems of the international community.

First, on the matter of Security Council reform, we regret that the discussions in the Working Group established by the General Assembly 10 years ago have yet to produce any significant progress or a way out of the deadlock.

The Secretary-General has proposed that we set 2005 as a deadline for reaching agreement on the changes that are needed in our international institutions. Japan takes this proposal very seriously

and holds the view that a political decision should be made at that time through the convening of a meeting of heads of States or Government regarding the reform of the United Nations, and of the Security Council in particular, as proposed by our Foreign Minister during the general debate.

Japan also supports the initiative of the Secretary-General to establish a high-level panel of eminent personalities. We will be following those developments with great interest. Japan intends to make the maximum contribution possible to that initiative.

In order for the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Security Council to be enhanced, new permanent members need to be added that are both willing and able to shoulder global responsibility. Japan has repeatedly expressed its intention to continue to work actively for the realization of Security Council reform and would like to assume greater responsibility as a permanent member in a reformed Council.

When we talk about true United Nations reform, it is our strong conviction that such reform must lead to a system of world governance that can provide each and every Member with a sense of legitimacy and fairness. Unless a sense of fairness is widely shared among Member States, we cannot hope for the smooth management of the United Nations. Japan believes that achieving appropriate and equitable burden-sharing among Member States must be the focus of our attention.

In this regard, we believe that the scale of assessments should, at an appropriate time, be better balanced and made more equitable, in conformity with each country's actual economic performance, as well as with its status and level of responsibility in the United Nations. In addition, the attainment of equitable geographical distribution among Member States with regard to the number of staff in the Secretariat is long overdue. Severe underrepresentation must be redressed as a matter of priority.

While the deployment of peacekeeping operations should be carried out according to the circumstances specific to each case, we also believe that the budgetary burden for such operations should be kept at a reasonable level for Member States. Special care must also be taken to ensure transparency — particularly vis-à-vis major financial contributors — when making decisions to establish and redesign peacekeeping operations. Some form of dialogue

mechanism with those contributors should be developed.

Finally, the famous four criteria introduced by Ambassador Mahbubani of Singapore are applicable not only to the Security Council but also to the General Assembly and the United Nations as a whole. We must be constantly monitoring our own performance, asking ourselves whether we are managing to handle issues successfully, improving on procedural matters and working methods, being transparent and open among ourselves and enhancing our credibility and prestige with the international community. Reform is a continuous process that requires our devotion and constant effort. Japan is prepared to do its utmost in order to make a significant contribution to that process.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): This debate on strengthening the United Nations system and revitalizing the General Assembly is important, essential and timely. Every institution needs to continue to renew itself in order to stay relevant, efficient and effective. Today, even the Organization's strongest detractors recognize that it is relevant if the old and new challenges which face the international community are to be addressed.

The Secretary-General outlined these challenges in his opening remarks at the inauguration of the Assembly's general debate last month. His call for institutional review and reform was timely. We welcome his initiative to convene a group of eminent personalities to deliberate and make recommendations to him for consideration by Member States. We trust that the composition and work of those eminent personalities will reflect the broad spectrum of views and approaches to reform which exist in this Assembly.

The statement made by Algeria today reflects the broad approach of the Non-Aligned Movement. Pakistan aligns itself with that approach.

We thank Deputy Secretary-General Fréchette for her statement and for her dedicated efforts to preserve and promote the institutional vitality of the United Nations.

Pakistan greatly appreciates the vigour with which the President of the Assembly has devoted himself to promoting the reform process. His informal paper of 17 October provides an invaluable framework and guide for our work on the General Assembly's revitalization.

We must commence by acknowledging that, thanks to the purposeful efforts of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, considerable progress has been made since 1997 in improving the United Nations Secretariat and its support machinery. Pakistan has contributed to this process, especially to human management reform, and we will continue our active participation.

We endorse the Secretary-General's suggestion that attention now be focused on the institutional reform of the intergovernmental organs of the United Nations.

The Assembly discussed the reform of the Security Council recently, and I will not repeat our views on that issue. But in the context of United Nations reform, it is necessary to draw attention to the following considerations. First, the Security Council is progressively extending the scope of its responsibilities far beyond the role — the central role — it was assigned in the Charter to deal with threats to international peace and security. New efforts to entrust the Council with responsibilities for counter-proliferation while ignoring the goals of disarmament is a current case in point.

Secondly, the deliberations of the Council lack transparency and openness, contrary to rule 48 of its provisional rules of procedure. This ethos of opacity on the part of the Council must be changed. It is for the Assembly to insist on that change, here and in the concerned capitals.

While criticism of the Security Council's shortcomings are subdued, assessments of this Assembly are often harsh. Inefficient, ineffective and irrelevant are often the adjectives in a description of the General Assembly. Such harsh assessments ignore history and international politics. The General Assembly has registered many outstanding historic achievements. It played the leading role in enabling the peoples under colonial rule to liberate themselves through the exercise of the right of self-determination. The Assembly has contributed immensely to the evolution of international law and norms. It has addressed issues of peace and security, and opposed aggression and the use of force whenever the Security Council was paralysed by partisan vetoes. It has created institutions for international cooperation in vital fields and convened conferences to mobilize the international community on issues of global priority.

It is not surprising that the Assembly's agenda is long and often overloaded. Each of the States Members of the United Nations has a sovereign and democratic right to bring before the Assembly its difficulties and its despair, its ideas and its initiatives.

Our agenda would be shorter if the problems and issues brought before the Assembly could be speedily resolved. The much advertised irrelevance of the General Assembly has, in fact, been inflicted on it. Transferring consideration of most of the burning issues of our time — terrorism, non-proliferation and disarmament — to the Security Council sucks the political oxygen out of the General Assembly. Enhancing the role of the Assembly is a political, not a procedural exercise.

Sadly, despite their profession of respect for the principle of sovereign equality, some States support proposals to create more restricted bodies — an executive committee, steering committee, or other select and privileged groups — within the General Assembly, ostensibly to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness. Such bodies, like the Security Council, may be able to adopt decisions more quickly and perhaps more clearly, but they will lack universality and legitimacy. They will deprive the majority of a voice on the most important issues. They will increase inequality within the United Nations. They will transform the Assembly into a rubber stamp.

This is not to say that procedural improvements should not be made in the General Assembly's work. A number of useful suggestions have been advanced which merit positive consideration.

First, the rationalization of the Assembly's agenda is a desirable objective. Similar items can be amalgamated. Related items can be grouped. Some items which are no longer of interest to any Member State can be eliminated. Several items presently taken up by the plenary could be assigned to a Main Committee. At the same time, the agenda must remain open to the insertion of new issues which may arise. However, it must be borne in mind that the rationalization of the agenda is essentially a political exercise. We should first decide who will review and recommend the agenda's rationalization — the General Committee, friends of the President or a specially created group. Discussions will have to take place in consultation with the States with an interest in the

items concerned. And any criteria utilized to guide those decisions will have to be applied equitably.

Secondly, the Assembly can do much to improve the content of its resolutions. We should attempt to restrict ourselves to shorter resolutions, at least on those items which have been previously considered. It could also be a requirement that draft resolutions on old items be submitted and circulated a few days before consideration of the item, so that discussion can focus on the draft resolution rather than become a repetition of general views. On new issues, debates may be necessary before the drafting of decisions.

Thirdly, the Main Committees of the Assembly have developed their own entrenched cultures. There is a need to harmonize their work. There is also need to introduce uniformity in the decision-making process in the various Committees. Some of them work on the basis of consensus. Others resort to voting as a norm. Yet others show a mix of practices.

Fourthly, covering the simultaneous meetings of the plenary and six Main Committees is beyond the capacity of most of the smaller delegations. It also stretches the conference services. Permanent representatives are unable to devote adequate attention to all the issues. As suggested by many from this rostrum, the sequential convening of the Committee meetings, spread from the first of January to the middle of September should be seriously considered. The results of the Committees could be collectively approved in the plenary when it convenes in September for the general debate.

The management of the plenary and the Main Committees through the year should be entrusted to the president of the General Assembly. To enable him to discharge those responsibilities, it seems essential to strengthen the president's executive office.

Another extremely important aspect is cooperation between the Assembly and the other main organs of the United Nations, particularly the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. Greater coherence in the work of the three organs will bring synergy to our work. In that context, my delegation has proposed the idea of composite committees whose memberships are to be drawn from the three main organs in order to address complex crises.

Considerable attention has also been devoted to the reform and revival of the Economic and Social

Council. It cannot be revived merely by changing its name. If an Economic and Social Security Council is created, will it be empowered to consider and decide on central issues relating to the management of international economic and social relations? Will its decisions be binding on Member States like the Security Council's and thus be implemented by Member States? In our view, it may be more productive to focus on ways and means to operationalize the responsibility entrusted to the Economic and Social Council under the Charter and in the recent decisions for integrated coordination and follow-up of the major international conferences.

Aside from the question of political will, the decisions of Member States cannot be realized without adequate resources. It is ironic that parsimony is practiced only when it comes to financing the operations and actions of the United Nations. The political and moral justification for constraining the United Nations to virtually zero growth must be questioned. The concomitant of United Nations reform must be the political commitment by all States to fund the approved activities of the United Nations.

Pakistan believes that reform of the budget of the United Nations and the budget formulation process will strengthen the Organization. For us, the most important issue is the end result. We would support a formula that better enables the Organization to achieve its mandates and which ensures an alignment of resources with the priority activities of the Organization.

However, some of the systemic implications of a change in the current budgetary process need to be examined closely.

First, if we were to change the format of the medium-term plan (MTP) and the role of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), through what mechanism will Member States ensure that all mandates have been translated into implementable programmes and provided the adequate funding?

Secondly, how do we handle the setting of priorities, a function that currently falls within the purview of the CPC? Thirdly, what would be the role of the MTP and who would frame and review it? And if it is to be abolished and replaced by a strategic framework, as is being proposed by the Joint Inspection Unit, which inter-governmental body would frame and review the framework?

We look forward to a substantive and constructive debate on this important item, which has far-reaching implications for the future of our Organization and indeed for inter-State relations. We assure the president of the full cooperation of the Pakistan delegation in evolving positive and generally acceptable decisions to strengthen the United Nations and revitalize the General Assembly.

Mr. Fadaifard (Islamic Republic of Iran): I wish to begin by expressing my gratitude to the Secretary-General for pursuing United Nations reform. I also praise him for his reports on the different aspects of United Nations reform and his proposals for streamlining the work of the General Assembly and its Main Committees.

I cannot fail to convey my delegation's support for the president's efforts aimed at revitalizing the General Assembly, and we appreciate the non-paper that he circulated. My delegation would like also to associate itself with the statements made by the Ambassador of Algeria as the coordinator of the working group of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Ambassador of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The General Assembly represents the principle of sovereign equality among Member States and manages to bring their representatives together on an equal footing. As such, it offers a unique opportunity for deliberations among all Member States and engagement in cooperation on a broad spectrum of issues at the global level. It is true that the General Assembly often can make decisions based only on the lowest common denominator, but the significance of its decisions arises more from its legitimate and all-encompassing nature. Thus, given the central position of the General Assembly in the United Nations system, it is all the more necessary to ponder and act more effectively, with a view to bringing about appropriate and necessary changes in the way it works.

In fulfilling such a task, my delegation sees merit in grouping revitalization issues in two clusters — the first is on enhancing the authority and the role of the General Assembly and the second is on improving the Assembly's working methods. Those two clusters are, no doubt, interrelated. If Member States demonstrated their political commitment to strengthening the authority and the role of the General Assembly, we believe that its working methods would take on more

importance and could be much more easily addressed. In our view, seeking to ensure a balanced and comprehensive approach to such a delicate exercise requires that such a sequence not be ignored.

The same attitude may be adopted with respect to the reform of the Economic and Social Council. Meanwhile, we face a different set of problems when it comes to the functioning of the Security Council and international financial institutions. We concur with the Secretary-General that decisions may be more easily reached in these bodies, and that in some cases they may have a decisive impact on events in the world. But the difficulty with those decisions is the fact that they are considered less legitimate in the eyes of many nations, especially in the developing world, which feels that its views and interests are not sufficiently taken into consideration in the decision-making process.

We are pleased that, following a long process of negotiation during the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, Member States could adopt a resolution by consensus on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits. Regardless of the complexities involved, we hope that this achievement can enable the United Nations, particularly two of its important organs — the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council — to better respond to the development needs of developing countries through efficient organization of their work, in keeping with the priorities of the international community. In our view, that cannot take place in isolation from past relevant General Assembly resolutions, the ongoing debate on United Nations reform, the need for reflection of macroeconomic perspectives and the strengthening of developmental issues in the work of the Main Committees of the General Assembly.

My delegation is also appreciative of the report of the Secretary-General on the review of technical cooperation in the United Nations (A/58/382). We can go along with his conclusions and recommendations, particularly the one that requests the United Nations Development Programme to undertake a review of a few key issues on which the division of labour can be improved. Cooperation, coordination and greater interaction among United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, international financial institutions and the regional banks, for increased complementarity and better division of labour have been stressed in

numerous decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The main objective of such coordination should be strengthening and building upon existing arrangements for support to developing countries, in accordance with their priorities and, needless to say, under the leadership of the national Government, for greater efficiency and impact.

My delegation has noted the efforts aimed at streamlining publications and reports, as well as planning and managing conferences and meetings. We support consultative processes among the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the Chairmen of the Main Committees for consolidating reports on related topics, on the basis of decisions of the Main Committees, as a means to facilitate debate and reduce documentation, while maintaining balance among various issues.

We support the intensified efforts for simplification and improvement of the planning and budgetary process of the United Nations. The budget document itself has been shortened and attempts have been made to align activities with priorities. It is hoped that these changes, along with efforts to enhance transparency and the quality of information contained in the budget document, will assist Member States in their intergovernmental discussions.

As requested in resolution 57/300, the Secretary-General has recently submitted a more detailed proposal on a shorter, more strategic medium-term plan that is linked to the budget outline and a reinforced system of evaluation and monitoring. The proposal on a single-stage intergovernmental review of the medium-term plan and programme budget has also been clarified. While we look forward to examining all the details of these crucial proposals, along with reviewing the other aspects of the planning and budgeting process, we stress that the results of this comprehensive exercise should ultimately contribute to the strengthening of effective intergovernmental participation at all stages of the process in order to ensure the best results through the effective implementation of mandates.

To better identify and reflect priorities in programmes and activities, we need to ensure that all intergovernmental mandates are incorporated into the medium-term plan as the basic strategic directive of the Organization. Programme planning should continue to be built on legislative mandates, as the determining

factor in this regard, and, therefore, resources cannot constitute the basis for priority setting. Efforts to support the existing coherence between planning and budgeting exercises should, rather, enhance alignment of budget provisions with priorities. In this connection, increased allocation of resources to areas that can contribute to narrowing the widening economic gap between North and South is enormously fundamental. There are compelling arguments that further negligence of such realities would pose severe threats to peace and security in the world.

Reform of the General Assembly and its Main Committees is not only a necessity, but an obligation, in order to rebuild the Organization into a dynamic international institution in the age of globalization. It is a means to achieve the goal of turning the United Nations into an effective universal organization, ready to address contemporary challenges. The principal objective would be to enhance capacities and to strengthen the capabilities of multilateral machinery for collective action in response to global demands and concerns. Hence, reform proposals should refrain from adopting selective approaches and instead present solutions that will enable the United Nations to implement the priorities identified by its Member States.

The high-level panel of eminent personalities proposed by the Secretary-General could contribute to these deliberations if its membership represents an international character and the diversified opinions prevailing within the Organization.

We agree with the Secretary-General that only Member States can take firm and clear decisions on the recommendations of the Panel. Therefore, the terms of reference of such a Panel should underscore the intergovernmental process of decision-making in the United Nations. The consideration of institutional reform as a last resort could also be included in the programme of work of the Panel if that is the only way to realize the aspirations of Member States, particularly developing countries.

In conclusion, we share the view of the Secretary-General that the events of the last year have reinforced his statement that

“the need for a strong multilateral institution — one dedicated to the service of humanity as a whole — has never been more acutely felt than in

the current era of globalization”. (A/57/387, para. 2)

My delegation, in its turn, reiterates its readiness and commitment to actively participating in achieving that requirement.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): My delegation aligns itself with the statement of the Permanent Representative of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

During the Millennium Summit in 2000, the largest number of heads of State and Government ever to assemble at the United Nations reaffirmed

“the central position of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations” (*resolution 55/2, para. 30*)

and called on it to be strengthened so as to play that role effectively. We wish to contribute three concrete proposals on how this mandate could be implemented.

South Africa welcomes the Secretary-General's intention to appoint a blue-ribbon panel that is expected to review the effectiveness, coherence and balance of roles between the principal organs of the United Nations. We are committed to the reform and expansion of the Security Council and the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council. We also are interested in redefining the relationship of the United Nations system with the Bretton Woods institutions, including the World Trade Organization. However, in this debate we wish to make specific proposals only about the revitalization of the General Assembly.

We fully concur with the President's suggested framework for action, which will consider the issue of the revitalization and reform of the General Assembly in two clusters. The first is on enhancing the authority and role of the General Assembly, and the second is on improving the working methods of the General Assembly. We believe that these issues are interrelated and must be addressed in a comprehensive and coherent manner.

Frankly, the machinery of this Assembly has become cumbersome and overburdened with an ever-growing agenda. Its working methods do not allow for flexibility to address the ever-changing global agenda. The United Nations of the twenty-first century requires

leadership that is allowed room to be proactive, creative and not constrained by procedures that were designed for the post-Second World War period. It is therefore not sufficient to lament the lack of authority of the General Assembly and its diminished role in relation to the Security Council and other principal organs. We carry the solemn responsibility to restore the General Assembly as the chief deliberative policy-making body of the United Nations by addressing the reasons for the erosion of its authority.

Member States would have to concede that it is difficult, if not impossible, to address more than 170 resolutions in a plenary session that lasts only 13 weeks. After all, there are probably few, if any, of the Parliaments of the Member States that address their national priorities in sessions of less than three months.

Our rules of procedure certainly do not limit the General Assembly plenary session to between September and Christmas Eve. My delegation is aware that a special committee in 1971 did not endorse a suggestion that the session of the General Assembly be divided into two parts. However, since then the United Nations has expanded and its agenda has grown tremendously. The General Assembly does meet from September of one year to the following September. However, we would be disingenuous if we did not admit that the real attention is paid to issues considered from September to December, which is the reason we all want our resolutions introduced during this period.

Therefore, we agree with the Non-Aligned Movement's working group on the revitalization of the General Assembly that we should consider dividing the Assembly's plenary sessions into two parts. We believe that Member States can easily dedicate a second plenary session of the General Assembly to be held in the weeks or months beyond Christmas Eve and before the following September. Outside of those two dedicated plenary sessions, the General Assembly would still be available to meet in plenary and to address any emergency issues that might arise.

Another reality we face is that more than 80 per cent of our missions have less than 10 officials, including administration and office staff. Therefore, in simultaneously scheduling meetings of the General Assembly plenary, the Main Committees — as we are doing this afternoon — the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and even regional and other groups, we ourselves are making it impossible for

the majority of United Nations Members to participate in the business of the Organization, such as we are conducting right now. As a result, this raises questions as to whether we are able to take decisions that are inclusive and relevant to the rest of the international community.

It is for these reasons that my delegation would propose that we consider the sequencing of Committee meetings so as to allow as many delegations as possible to participate in the decision-making process. Having two dedicated General Assembly plenary sessions would allow Committees to spread their work over a longer period. It would also reaffirm the purposes for which the Main Committees were created, that is, to conduct thorough analyses and assessments of and to propose policy responses to the many complex challenges facing the United Nations.

Also, we believe that it is essential for us to redefine the role and purpose of the plenary sessions of the Assembly. We urge that consideration be given to holding General Assembly plenary meetings infrequently, perhaps even a few times a month. This would allow the plenary to be dedicated to important current debates, including focusing on thematic debates. Calling for almost daily plenary meetings to discuss virtually every issue on the calendar makes it hard for delegations — much less for the world at large — to focus on those discussions.

We can all recall the few occasions when the General Assembly plenary has dedicated significant time to an important issue and when all missions, big and small, have participated and even the world at large has followed our deliberations with interest. A recent example was the resumed tenth emergency special session held this past week, in which, for one afternoon and late into the evening, the General Assembly discussed in plenary the issue of the separation wall that Israel is building in Palestine. The impact and decision of that debate was felt throughout the world.

For us to revitalize the debates of the General Assembly plenary, we would have to agree on issues to be scheduled for these plenary meetings. If, for example, we agree that the Secretary-General's report on the follow-up to the Millennium Summit is important, we must schedule a General Assembly plenary meeting, in which everyone can have an opportunity to attend and participate. That might mean

that we would agree to adjourn the work of the Committees and of the Security Council so as to allow all Members to participate in such an important plenary debate. That would require us to be creative and to prioritize our work if we wish to have an impact and pronounce on the changing global agenda. The fact that, right now, some of us may think that is an impossible goal to achieve may be one of the reasons we have failed in reforming and revitalizing the General Assembly.

In conclusion, allow me to restate the three concrete proposals we wish to contribute to this debate. We should seriously consider extending the General Assembly session beyond Christmas Eve; there should be sequencing of the work of the Main Committees so as to allow greater democratic participation and decision-making; and we must reserve General Assembly plenary meetings for debating important global issues.

None of those concrete suggestions can take effect without the leadership of the President of the General Assembly. My delegation is pleased that we elect the President two or three months before the next session begins. Now we must look into providing the incoming President with all the necessary resources and tools — including a temporary office with Secretariat support — which would allow the incoming President to prepare for the upcoming session. That, we believe, would enable the President to hit the ground running.

Mr. Neil (Jamaica): We support the statements made this morning by the representative of Algeria, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement; by the representative of Morocco, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; and by the representative of Suriname, on behalf of the Caribbean Community. We wish only to emphasize a number of points that the delegation of Jamaica considers to be of importance.

In the course of the general debate, concluded last month, a common theme was the need for a strengthening of the United Nations. An important dimension of that is the reform and revitalization of the organs and institutional arrangements of the system. We have already expressed our views on the question of reform of the Security Council, which is a paramount and urgent priority. Of equal importance is revitalization of the General Assembly, which does not need reform as much as a reassertion of its authority

and mandate. As provided in Articles 10 and 11 of the Charter, it should play a pivotal role in the management of the international system. We do not contemplate any Charter amendment, but rather practical measures to restore its status and role, which might require some changes in the rules of procedure. We should like to suggest some of those lines of action.

First, revitalization should mean a more active Assembly. We should increase the holding of scheduled Assembly meetings throughout the year by way of distributing the agenda over time and addressing critical issues as they arise. That could happen at least at quarterly intervals. Those should include at least one session devoted especially to substantive consideration of economic development issues, bringing together all relevant agencies within the United Nations system. That should become an occasion not just for debate and exchange of views, but also for the formulation of common principles to guide economic cooperation and development policy with respect to trade, finance and technology.

In the area of peace and security, there is room for the Assembly to play a more active role throughout the year in reviewing the work of the Security Council to preserve the principle of accountability, in keeping with the provisions of Article 24 of the Charter. Meetings could be held on the basis of special reports requested when the Council has been unable to act on matters affecting international peace and security by virtue of a deadlock in the decision-making process. Special meetings might also be necessary when the Council is authorizing enforcement action, since such decisions are binding on all Member States. If that is done, we would have a more active Assembly more directly involved in the management of global affairs, as envisaged in Articles 10 and 11 of the Charter.

Second, revitalization should restore the authority of the Assembly in the areas of its competence. We see two things that should be done. To begin with, the holding of thematic debates in the Security Council should be discontinued. These generally concern matters that should be left for debate and resolution in the General Assembly. Our view is that the Security Council's ambit of responsibility is generally described in Articles 34 and 39. We believe that thematic debates constitute an encroachment on the areas of responsibility of the General Assembly, which is empowered to decide on policies and programmes in relation to those issues.

Our other concern is with respect to the assignment to international conferences of subject matters that ordinarily have to be dealt with at special sessions of the General Assembly. What has resulted is that, in many areas of social and economic affairs, the reference points for international policy are international conference decisions, not resolutions of the General Assembly. That has weakened the Assembly's role as the authentic voice of the international community in relation to such matters.

The third area of action would be in the strengthening of the office of the presidency. That means incorporating the presidency into consultations affecting all important initiatives and activities within the United Nations system. We should also be able to deploy the President as the representative of the United Nations at international consultations and meetings of various bodies at both the regional and specialized levels and at meetings with world leaders. There is an opportunity to develop an outreach programme that would bring the United Nations into closer contact with the world outside to increase visibility and public awareness of developments in the United Nations. That would necessarily entail the provision of greater staffing and financial resources for the presidency. The current level of resources provided from the regular budget does not allow for any active role or much room for outreach activities.

Fourth, revitalization requires more substantive decision-making by the General Assembly. Regrettably, in recent years the decisions of the General Assembly have become increasingly devoid of substance. That is due largely to the tendency to seek a consensus based on the lowest common denominator. The result of that is the passage of resolutions with studied ambiguity in their language, which fail to give a clear, positive direction in matters of international cooperation. Very often, such decisions are patchwork formulations of what is called agreed language — extracted from negotiated texts from conference outcomes — and do not reflect the needs of a changing international situation. Our view is that there is a need to develop a better approach to decision-making, in keeping with the democratic principles of Article 18 of the Charter.

Fifth, revitalization should mean a greater focus on implementation. We believe that there should be a special mechanism in the Secretariat for the monitoring of the implementation of General Assembly decisions,

and special focus in the reports of the Secretary-General identifying the problem areas.

Sixth, revitalization should bring improvements in the working methods of the General Assembly. In this respect, we generally support two broad initiatives.

First, we support the attempt at rationalization of the agenda by redistributing items either through a biennial or triennial cycle and, where necessary, by retiring items which may no longer have currency or by arranging for mergers between related items, so as to rationalize the agenda.

Secondly, we support arrangements for an interactive format for debates on agenda items. We believe that there is a need for change from the dull monotony of prepared statements. One strategy would be to use structured panels, which has two advantages. It would bring more expert information and analysis to assist Member States on particular subjects, and it would also stimulate more interactive discussion based on the material so provided.

My seventh point is the recognition that an important dimension of revitalization is a political revitalization on the part of Member States, who must adhere to the obligations and commitments of the multilateral process and participate in an open and transparent way through a full exchange of views in an atmosphere of respect, cooperation and goodwill.

Such a revitalization in participation is important to ensure that the system works for all of us. The gradual marginalization of the General Assembly over the years is, to a large extent, the result of our own negligence and of some degree of complacency and acquiescence. What is needed now is for a new spirit, a new commitment and a new energy to infuse the multilateral system. We therefore consider it important that whatever revitalization measures we agree on be accompanied by a political declaration reaffirming multilateralism and a commitment to energize the role of the General Assembly.

In closing, I wish briefly to comment on restructuring and revitalization in the economic, social and related fields. In our view, there is considerable scope for reform to ensure that overview, direction and coordination in the economic fields can become more effective. We are fortunate that, under the current leadership of the Economic and Social Council, reform is being pursued. I feel, however, that we are

handicapped by not having a specific mechanism to channel and coordinate all initiatives for reform. We feel that, in the light of all that is happening, it would be appropriate to create an ad hoc committee to examine and report on current initiatives for consideration before the closure of the fifty-eighth session.

Mr. Rastam (Malaysia): I should like to focus on agenda item 55, "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly". My delegation would like to congratulate Mr. Hunte for the efforts he has made since assuming the presidency to introduce a fresh approach and dynamism to the consideration of this item. The resourcefulness, innovativeness and determination that he and his team have brought to this exercise augur well for the emergence of a dynamic and revitalized General Assembly.

My delegation is convinced that his decision to begin consultations on this highly important question right from the very beginning of his presidency was a move in the right direction, one that has generated a renewed interest among delegations in coalescing around the presidency in order to achieve concrete results aimed at revitalizing the General Assembly. We are extremely encouraged by that move.

My delegation associates itself with the statements made by the Permanent Representative of Algeria, in his capacity as Coordinator of the Non-Aligned Movement Working Group on the Reform of the United Nations and the Revitalization of the General Assembly, and by the Permanent Representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Given the importance of this item to my delegation, I wish to add and emphasize a few points. I should like also to congratulate the various speakers who took the floor earlier who made some very, very pertinent points.

Malaysia fully subscribes to the position of the Non-Aligned Movement on the questions of strengthening, restructuring, revitalizing and democratizing the United Nations, as contained in paragraphs 26 to 33 of the Final Document of the thirteenth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Kuala Lumpur from 20 to 25 February 2003. Malaysia also fully subscribes to the position of the Group of 77 on these questions, as contained in the Declaration of its Ministerial Meeting, convened in New York last month.

In our discussions on this very important issue, three words and concepts are often used: revitalization, restructuring and strengthening. I would simply like to remind myself of the meaning of these words. The Oxford dictionary offers the following definitions of these words: revitalization means "to put new life"; restructuring means "giving a new or different structure or arrangement"; and strengthening means "causing something or somebody to become stronger".

I think that we all are in agreement that we need to put new life into the General Assembly. There is the view that much of the oxygen has been sucked out of it. There is also probably the view that the General Assembly has become lethargic and is losing its memory, its hearing and its teeth. There is also the view that the General Assembly needs a new, or possibly a different structure or arrangements. What is most important is that we are all in agreement as to the need to prescribe the General Assembly a new blend of tonic, however bitter it might be.

We all know exactly what the problems and symptoms are. We all have ideas on what needs to be done. We all are fully aware of the final destination that should be reached in this process. We have a possible road map for reaching it, in the form of the informal note that the President has prepared, as well as other existing documents, in particular the Charter of the United Nations, the Millennium Declaration and relevant General Assembly resolutions.

My delegation sincerely hopes that, with the current momentum and under the leadership of Mr. Hunte all Member States can come together to begin a process of genuine change, revitalization and strengthening, which would truly have an impact on making the work of the General Assembly more efficient and effective, so that its voice can be heard and its decisions respected and implemented.

Articles 10 to 17 of the Charter of the United Nations clearly outline the functions and powers of the General Assembly. Numerous resolutions have also been adopted by the Assembly over the years that are aimed at enhancing its efficiency and effectiveness, including as concerns its methods of work. We note that most of the provisions of those resolutions have been successfully implemented. However, there are some important ones which have not. The President's efforts to implement the relevant provisions is a good start, and we welcome it.

We have noted the background document prepared by the Secretariat on the chronology and analysis of the relevant General Assembly resolutions. We think that one of the immediate tasks before us should be to review this question and find ways and means to ensure that past decisions and resolutions can be implemented, taking into account the fact that it may be necessary to make certain modifications in accordance with changing circumstances.

In this connection, my delegation would like to suggest that the Secretariat, in particular the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management, be requested to monitor the implementation of all resolutions of the General Assembly, as well as to help ensure the application of the relevant Articles of the Charter relating to the work of the General Assembly. We could agree on the need for Member States to be more accountable in initiating draft resolutions and in monitoring the implementation of resolutions once they have been adopted. It is for us, the Member States, to ensure the effectiveness of the General Assembly. We have to ensure that the Assembly's decisions and recommendations are followed up, complied with and implemented sincerely and wholeheartedly by all parties concerned. My delegation believes that we would be moving in the right direction if the sponsors of resolutions played a more responsible role in ensuring not only ownership, but also follow up, accountability and implementation.

Obviously, there is a need in the revitalization exercise to examine the resolutions churned out by the General Assembly annually. Between the fifty-first session and the fifty-sixth session, the number of resolutions increased from 311 to 360. What is important is not the number of resolutions but the need for them to be more concise and focused. Ensuring their actual implementation by Member States, the Secretariat and others should be our primary consideration. In this regard, the experience of work done in other international bodies and in national parliaments might be instructive for us in the General Assembly.

One of the issues that need to be looked at closely in the revitalization process is that of reports and the reporting process. Relevant General Assembly resolutions need to be reviewed in order to allow for an honest assessment on the part of Member States with regard to, for example, whether it would be in the interests of everyone to continue with the practice of

requesting the Secretary-General to produce more reports every year. Further improvements could be made to the reporting process.

My delegation would like to add its voice in support of the view that the office of the President should be further strengthened. We must do all we can to ensure that this can be achieved, including by ensuring the provision of adequate financial and other resources. We commend the effort of the President to have a corps of experienced diplomats and experts within his cabinet to assist him in his work during this session of the General Assembly. But that, of course, is not enough. The presidency should be supported by adequate resources and staff from the Secretariat. Previous General Assembly resolutions, in particular resolution 51/241, need to be reviewed and re-examined in the effort to strengthen the role of the President of his office.

On the question of the methods of work of the General Assembly, my delegation welcomes the idea of having some of the interconnected and cross-cutting agenda items debated jointly, and agenda items biennialized or triennialized. We should be more circumspect, however, in promoting joint debate on items that are considered critical, such as those we are dealing with today. We would not do justice to many of these items by having them debated jointly, with a seven-minute time limit per speaker — especially if those items generate wide interest and warrant specific and focused discussion with a view the adoption of important decisions. Having such items jointly debated may not necessarily enhance the effectiveness of the work of the General Assembly. What is required is wide and deep interest in those items and in the adoption of appropriate resolutions and decisions by the General Assembly relating to them.

My delegation is supportive of the idea that the programme of work of the General Assembly be scheduled for the whole 12-month duration of each session, rather than concentrating it into the period September to December, as is the current practice. To restore its central position as the chief deliberative, policy-making and universally representative organ of the United Nations, the General Assembly could revise its current programme of work to allow for greater participation by all delegations, in particular the smaller delegations from the developing countries.

Instead of having one regular session, the General Assembly could be convened in two or three regular sessions throughout the year. Such an undertaking could result in a more manageable General Assembly, including with regard to the work of the Main Committees, thereby increasing and enhancing its effectiveness and efficiency. In addition, Member States with limited human and financial resources would be able to participate and contribute more actively and meaningfully. Such States, most of which are from the developing and least developed countries, are equally important stakeholders in the work of the General Assembly. They should be able to participate meaningfully and democratically in deliberations and the adoption of decisions on a majority of the Assembly's agenda items which are of direct and immediate concern and interest to them.

It appears that over the years the Main Committees have successfully transformed themselves, in a gradual manner, into individual entities in their own right — each with its own deep-rooted corporate culture and tradition. In certain instances, unwritten customs and traditions appear to take precedence over the rules of procedure of the General Assembly in the work of some Committees. In the interests of preserving the role, status and prestige of the General Assembly as a whole, in accordance with the relevant Articles of the Charter, such a development must not be allowed to continue. Any work done to revitalize the Committees should not be a piecemeal effort. It must be part of the comprehensive exercise which we are now undertaking.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to reassure the President of our continued readiness to support him and cooperate with him, as well as with other delegations, in bringing about the much needed revitalization of the General Assembly. My delegation is optimistic that under his able and proven leadership, we will be able to achieve our objective within a clear time frame. We count on his leadership and on the political will of all Member States to enable us to achieve the desired results.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Guatemala aligns itself fully with the statements of the representatives of Morocco, Algeria and Peru, who spoke, respectively, on behalf of the Group of 77, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Rio Group. We need not repeat what has already been said, and will accordingly restrict ourselves to one aspect that, in our

judgement, has been insufficiently explored. I am referring to the formal and informal links that exist between the three main intergovernmental organs established by the Charter. In this regard, it would probably be best to consider the three agenda items with which we are dealing at today's meeting in an integrated manner.

Indeed, our debate would gain much if, instead of examining the revitalization of the General Assembly on the one hand and the reform of the United Nations on the other, we were to approach the consideration of the issue in a systemic manner. Much of the criticism levelled at the General Assembly springs from the weaknesses in the way in which this body interacts with the Security Council. In the same vein, overlap and duplication between the work of the Second Committee and the Economic and Social Council have been the subject of frequent comment in this Hall.

In this regard, we applaud the Secretary-General's appeal, on 23 September, for us to adapt the United Nations to the new circumstances being faced by humanity. The core of such reform is undoubtedly the transformations to be made to the Organization's system of governance, including the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

While the panel of eminent personalities to be appointed by the Secretary-General prepares its report for our consideration at the fifty-ninth session, there are some concrete steps that we can take to move in the direction that the report will most likely point. We already have some clear, though partial, hints from the reports submitted by the Secretary-General, including his original proposal contained in document A/57/387 — which, however, avoids the intergovernmental aspects — and the reports contained in documents A/58/351, A/58/382 and A/58/395, which we welcome.

On the other hand, we are not starting from zero. We should recall Assembly resolution 57/300, as many preceding speakers have done. Also on the issue of the reform of the budgetary programming process, we have the valuable report of the Joint Inspection Unit, contained in document JIU/REP/2003/2.

In that context — and recalling my original comment that we need to reflect more thoroughly on the links between the different organs — there is no doubt that the preparation and execution of the budget,

which is the prerogative of the General Assembly, is the single most important instrument for carrying out the mandate contained in the Millennium Declaration:

“To reaffirm the central position of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations ...” (*resolution 55/2, para. 30*).

In what other areas can we promote progress on the revitalization not only of the General Assembly but also of the other organs? I would like to cite several examples that, in our view, point in the right direction.

First, the General Assembly took an important step in adopting resolution 57/270 B on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields. It is important not only because of its substantive content but also because it offers an interesting mechanism for cooperation on this crucial issue between the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

Something similar can be said about the follow-up activities of the International Conference on Financing for Development. As will be recalled, paragraph 69 of the Monterrey Consensus entrusts very concrete and mutually supportive roles to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. This very same week, we are holding the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development, which builds on both the Secretary-General's report and the results of the 14 April meeting of the Economic and Social Council, the Bretton-Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization. Only the activities of the follow-up to conferences, in particular the Monterrey Consensus, offer the possibility of rapprochement between those two principal organs in very concrete activities and, consequently, in the revitalization of the Organization.

Similarly, there has recently been progress in defining a shared working relationship between the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council on the issue of reconstruction and development in countries emerging from conflict. The creation of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on African Countries Emerging from Conflict has permitted a shared effort between the two Councils on the question of Guinea-Bissau. It is hoped that this will also take place in the case of Burundi.

On the other hand, it is more difficult to determine the tasks to be shared between the General Assembly and the Security Council, despite the fact that the Assembly elects the non-permanent members of the Council and that Article 24 of the Charter clearly states that the Council acts on behalf of the Members of the General Assembly. But therein lies precisely one of the lacunae that the President of the General Assembly tried to address with the lucid proposals contained in his informal note circulated on 15 October, which served as the basis for our informal consultations of 17 October. We sincerely thank him for that. We believe that the steps already taken by the President, as well as the proposals he has now made, deserve our recognition.

Mr. Cunningham (United States of America): I am pleased to address the General Assembly today on the critical topic of strengthening the United Nations. I join others in thanking the Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General Fréchette for their efforts to pursue and implement reform of the United Nations. We also wish to offer our appreciation to President Hunte for taking the initiative on this urgent issue and for his summary of the open-ended informal consultations of the plenary on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

The world's leaders created the United Nations 58 years ago out of the ashes of world war. By building on the lessons of the past, the United Nations has become the central multilateral institution of international relations. Now, a new age calls for the United Nations to assume new obligations and responsibilities. However, like the Headquarters building itself, renovations will be needed to make this institution and its operations a modern and effective Organization that can fulfil its mandates in the twenty-first century, especially implementation of the Monterrey Consensus.

We think the place to begin is with principles, since reform for the sake of change alone is to take action without a context or framework for our work. We believe there are seven principles that should guide our reform work.

The first principle is responsibility. Since 11 September 2001 we have urged every country to consider the future of our world if terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction continue unabated. Every nation needs to fulfil its inherent

responsibility as a member of the international community to stop these global dangers.

The second principle is accountability, which means that membership in United Nations bodies, especially the Security Council, should go to those that shoulder the burdens. Those nations with fiscal responsibility should have a greater say in establishing programmes and budget priorities.

A third principle is effectiveness. We need to consolidate and rationalize both the structure of the United Nations Secretariat and the intergovernmental process, with its maze of committees, agencies, conferences, programmes and commissions.

A fourth principle entails the stewardship of financial resources. The intended beneficiaries of United Nations programmes must in fact benefit from them. Poorly performing agencies or programmes should improve or be ended, thus freeing up resources to be better spent on helping those in need.

The fifth principle is modernization. Nations in the United Nations caucus by region to establish candidacies. As the European Union expands, the composition of the West European and other States group and the East European group will change. Regional groups may need to realign, but they will also need to respect the principle of accountability when proposing candidates for the Commission on Human Rights or the Security Council, among others.

The sixth principle is credibility. Members of all United Nations bodies should reflect the purposes of those bodies. Sanctions should count. States subject to them should not be eligible to serve on the Security Council just as human rights abusers should not sit on the Human Rights Commission.

Finally, the seventh and perhaps most important principle is freedom. Advancing freedom should infuse everything the United Nations does, for liberty is essential to every significant human endeavour. United Nations programmes should be designed to help individuals secure their political and civil rights, promote the Monterrey Consensus, extend the rule of law and provide the benefits of economic freedom, good governance and democracy.

Bearing these principles in mind, we welcome the Secretary-General's call for a panel of eminent persons to make reform recommendations from outside the Organization, thereby bypassing the restraints that have

made change from within more difficult. While there have been similar efforts in the past, such as the 1986 eminent persons report to the forty-ninth General Assembly, there are three new factors that make this effort more compelling now than at any time since 1945.

The first factor is this Secretary-General's personal commitment to reform and reinvigorate the Organization to meet the rapidly changing circumstances and challenges of our times. Second is the broad-based recognition among Member States that the United Nations as an institution has vastly expanded its scope, range and volume of work over the past decade and that the current intergovernmental machinery and procedures are not able to respond quickly and effectively to the new and demanding issues before us. And third is the clear-cut determination of Member States to address the lack of coordination among all of its activities as an indispensable step to reforming the United Nations overly complex structure, processes and intergovernmental machinery.

Any effort to reform the United Nations should take a comprehensive look at the Security Council, the General Assembly, and the Economic and Social Council and the relationships among them. The Secretary-General made clear in his speech on 23 September to this Assembly that a rebalancing among the United Nations pillar institutions is needed to keep them vital and effective. We agree in terms of re-evaluating the agendas of the Security Council, General Assembly, and Economic and Social Council to bring them in line with the purposes and principles ascribed to them in the Charter of the United Nations. While we await the panel of eminent persons' proposals on Security Council reform, we can act now to implement some practical steps by adopting best practices that would sharpen the Security Council's agenda and consequently reduce the number of its meetings and possibly the number of its resolutions.

We all agree the General Assembly needs to be reformed and revitalized. But we think practical steps can be taken now to improve its work as well. For example, on the agenda, we call for expediting the clustering of issues, bi-annualizing and tri-annualizing items and most importantly, giving the General Committee and the President of the General Assembly greater authority to propose termination of agenda items. We also agree with some suggestions that the

General Committee could and should function as a bureau for the General Assembly.

We believe the General Assembly should become less of a speech-making body and more of an interactive and deliberative forum.

We also believe that incorporating the practice of the International Labour Organization — which adopts resolutions with only action-oriented operational paragraphs and no preambular paragraphs — would save considerable time, energy and resources.

Overall, we should harmonize the culture and working methods of all six Main Committees of the General Assembly to avoid duplication and overlap.

In the First Committee, the United States has put forward an improvement initiative to infuse new approaches and working methods in the Committee that reflect the challenges of our times and cast aside the old cold war disarmament agenda.

In the Second Committee, the United States has also proposed reforms to bring the vision and commitments of the Millennium Summit, the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development into the programme of work.

Since the Economic and Social Council, as currently constituted, neither effectively oversees its subordinate institutions nor monitors implementation of its own resolutions, it too needs fundamental reform.

Finally, I want to say a word on the Secretary-General's considerable efforts to address the United Nations budgetary process in his recent reform proposal. We support his efforts to streamline and integrate this process, which would alter the working relationships of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, and the Fifth Committee. While we believe the Committee for Programme and Coordination should be eliminated, we are prepared to discuss the idea of making it the lead body to conduct monitoring and evaluation of programmes, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions the primary body to review details of the budget — and to consider strengthening its role and scope in the budgetary process — and the Fifth Committee an oversight body that would review the broad policy aspects of the Secretary-General's biennial budgets.

Just as we advocated and are working towards results-based budgeting, we also call for results-based management. We offered strong support for General Assembly resolution 57/300, which calls for implementing the Secretary-General's 2002 reform agenda, including important Secretariat reforms in human resources management. We also believe that the Secretary-General's new report on implementation of that resolution offers a clear-eyed assessment of the way forward in fulfilling these measures. In that regard, we urge Member States to consider giving the Secretary-General greater authority to move a fixed percentage of resources and posts among departments, the same executive authority that any minister or president must have to manage the administrative resources of the Governments they lead. This also means that the Secretary-General needs to recommend a far greater number of programmes and activities to eliminate under financial rule 5.6 than the 912 outputs proposed for 2004-2005, out of a total of more than 40,000 outputs in the regular budget.

If we are to reform and revitalize the General Assembly and its subordinate institutions, we also need to consider the number of resolutions we adopt and the way we adopt them in this and other bodies of the General Assembly. For example, there are 22 resolutions on the agenda that deal with the Middle East and Israel and additional resolutions from emergency special sessions that are becoming increasingly routine. We vote on each and every one because we cannot achieve a consensus in this chamber on any of them. We have often stated here and elsewhere in the United Nations that neither the Security Council nor the General Assembly should take positions that predetermine the outcome of peace efforts, or even worse, harm their prospects with one-sided and uneven measures.

We strongly believe that the lack of reform, not the pursuit of reform, will harm the United Nations. If we do not act quickly, with determination and ingenuity, we will squander the opportunity to make this Organization better. We must do it for the sake of those in need today, but even more importantly, we must do it for the sake of those who will need this Organization's help tomorrow. It will not be easy or simple. But it will be our enduring legacy, if we succeed in making the United Nations a more effective and dynamic institution that one day may come close to fulfilling the goals for which it was created.

Mr. Staehelin (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Recent developments in the international situation have shown us that when it comes to certain problems, our Organization's Member States hold differing views and do not adopt the same approach in resolving those issues. In the multilateral context, the role of the United Nations, which is the only truly universal forum, remains crucial. However, it has become clear that in order to fully assume its role, the Organization must rapidly adapt itself to the international environment of the beginning of the twenty-first century. The need for reform is more pressing than ever.

The President took the Chair.

Switzerland warmly welcomes the Secretary-General's initiative of creating a high-level panel of eminent personalities to examine how to adapt the Organization to the new reality of the twenty-first century. This requires an innovative spirit and the courage to explore new paths. For our part, we would like to see a regular dialogue established between Member States and the panel.

We welcome your efforts and personal commitment, Mr. President, to the revitalization of the General Assembly. Your informal note of 15 October and the consultations you have conducted provide an excellent basis for our work.

You, Sir, have identified two clusters. With respect to the enhancement of the General Assembly's role and authority, we support the proposal for strengthening the Office of the President, enhancing the role of the General Assembly's General Committee and improving the functioning of the Main Committees.

With respect to improving the General Assembly's working methods, my delegation supports the vast majority of your suggestions, Mr. President. One particularly interesting idea that you mentioned is to redistribute the Assembly's work over the entire one-year duration of the session. Furthermore, reflection on a code of conduct, which would separate the flow of statements and the draft resolutions into groups, could be a first step towards reducing our overburdened agenda. In brief, the concrete implementation of those proposals will require greater self-discipline on the part of Member States and the renunciation of narrow special interests for the sake of the greater good.

We welcome the Deputy Secretary-General's statement this morning on progress on the reform measures proposed by the Secretary-General in his report of last year entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change", endorsed by resolution 57/300. Nevertheless, we believe that further common efforts must be undertaken to implement the report.

I shall limit myself to two observations on this issue. First, Switzerland supports the strengthening of the application of human rights treaties. It finds the idea of a consolidated report to be of particular interest; such a report would provide a better overall picture of the implementation of our legal obligations on this issue. Furthermore, we deem it essential that the United Nations regular budget provide sufficient resources for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to cover the costs incurred by the various bodies monitoring the treaties and the special procedures of the Commission for Human Rights.

Secondly, we support the Secretary-General's recommendations to streamline and lighten the Organization's planning and budgeting process. The proposed strategic framework, consisting of a two-year medium-term plan in conjunction with an adapted, more operational budgetary outline will make for a more coherent and strategic cycle. We believe it is necessary and important to establish a clear and logical link between the medium-term plan — which should be made a genuine plan of action — and the budget outline. That measure would, we hope, more closely link political priorities and budgetary planning.

Reforming the planning and budgeting cycle should also include the review of the tasks of the various bodies involved, such as the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly. With our increasingly burdened agendas, we cannot afford to permit several committees to take up the same question without clearly contributing added value.

It has been 13 years since the debate on United Nations reform was launched. It is time to move forward with more thorough changes. We must take advantage of our current momentum and show the required political will.

Mr. Talbot (Guyana): I am grateful for the opportunity to share some reflections on behalf of the delegation of Guyana in the joint debate on agenda items 55, 57, 58 and 59. In so doing, I associate my delegation fully with the statements made by the representatives of Algeria, Morocco and Suriname, speaking respectively on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 77 and China and the Caribbean Community.

Guyana joins in the support expressed for your efforts, Mr. President, to advance the process of revitalizing the Assembly. We welcome the initiative you have taken to implement those decisions of the Assembly which it is possible to advance at this time and your commitment and determination to develop, in consultation with Member States, proposals leading to the further revitalization of the Assembly.

The framework for action that you, Sir, have elaborated provides a sound basis for our work. Consideration of the revitalization issue has been conveniently grouped into two clusters: enhancing the role and authority of the General Assembly and improving its working methods. We support that framework.

In reviewing the process so far, we note that the question of the revitalization of the General Assembly has been on the agenda of this body for at least the past 13 years. The related questions concerning the strengthening of the United Nations system — measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields and United Nations reform — have also engaged our attention over the past decade. There can be little doubt that, as a result of those efforts, progress has been made in enhancing the efficiency and functioning of the Organization and in improving the working methods of its principal organs.

With respect to the General Assembly itself, more than 15 resolutions and decisions have been adopted whose primary aim is rationalizing its work and improving its procedures. In spite of those developments, the Assembly still struggles to answer the charge that it is failing to fulfil the mandate envisaged for it in the Charter of the United Nations. That is the central challenge facing the revitalization process.

The ultimate test of our success in meeting this challenge lies not in how well the Assembly works

internally, but rather in whether it makes a difference in the world commensurate with its role under the Charter and with the vision of our leaders, who called in the Millennium Declaration for the restoration of the Assembly as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations. Of course those two things are not unrelated. However, as the experience of the past 13 years shows, the attention to rationalization and improvement of working methods has not necessarily led to an enhancement of the role and the authority of the Assembly. My delegation therefore holds the view that the Assembly must now make simultaneous, concerted efforts under both of the clusters that you have identified, Mr. President. And we are encouraged to believe that, with good will on all sides, this is an undertaking well within our grasp.

Let me now suggest, from the perspective of the Guyana delegation, some of the possible areas where progress can be made during the current session. In this regard, Sir, I will focus my remarks within the framework of the two broad areas that you have set out.

In respect of efforts to enhance the authority and role of the General Assembly, I wish to highlight the following points. First, strengthening the role and the Office of the President should be integral to the process of revitalization. My country, having once held the presidency of the Assembly, supports efforts to strengthen the role and Office of the President, including by making available to it the permanent support of a modest cadre of professionals.

Secondly, my delegation supports efforts to enhance the visibility of the General Assembly. The global perception of the Assembly and of its relevance is determined in large measure by the media attention it receives. We support the initiative for more active engagement by the Department of Public Information in promoting the work of the Assembly in this domain. Equally important is the attention that needs to be paid to enhancing the substantive content of the Assembly's deliberations as well as the quality of its outcomes.

Thirdly, in our view, the relationship among the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council is critical in any effort to strengthen the Organization as a whole. With regard to the relationship between the Assembly and the Security Council in particular, some have voiced concern over what appears to be an encroachment on the part of the Council on areas deemed to be within the purview of

the Assembly. Others have attributed this to the inability of the Assembly to address some of the matters on its agenda. Guyana believes that any tendency towards a culture of competition between the General Assembly and the Security Council is to be avoided. We therefore will encourage the Assembly and its President to consider ways of further fostering greater cooperation between the two bodies. Here, the consideration by the Assembly of the report of the Security Council provides a basis for more meaningful interaction between these two organs in accordance with the Charter and relevant resolutions of the Assembly.

(spoke in Spanish)

Guyana aligns itself with the Rio Group on the necessity of implementing what has been agreed in Assembly resolutions concerning the assessment to be made by the President of the General Assembly on the debate in plenary meeting on the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization and the report of the Security Council.

(spoke in English)

We welcome the steps that you, Mr. President, have taken in that regard.

Fourthly, implementation of the resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly must be a key objective of the revitalization of the Assembly. This presupposes necessary attention to the quality of decisions adopted by the Assembly, including whether they can, in fact, be implemented. The Assembly may wish to mandate a periodic review of the implementation of its decisions with a view to identifying the problems that hinder implementation.

Turning to the second cluster of issues, my delegation remains committed to efforts to rationalize the agenda of the Assembly and to improve its working methods. We are similarly committed to this exercise in respect of the Main Committees of the Assembly, with a view to enhancing the overall effectiveness of the Assembly's work. In this context, we wish to make the following points.

First, we can support the proposal to programme the consideration of items on the Assembly's agenda over the full year of the session, providing it leads to a rationalization rather than a mere multiplication of the work done over the period from September to

December. The Secretariat may assist us with one or more scenarios of how such a session could work.

Secondly, regarding the prioritization of items for special attention, my delegation supports the focusing of efforts, where possible, on issues of global concern. We share the view that plenary meetings could be better utilized by focusing on global priorities of the day. We look forward to further clarification of the criteria and modalities to be applied in selecting items for special attention.

Thirdly, concerning the involvement of external actors, Guyana remains supportive of efforts to involve the wider community, including civil society, in the work of the United Nations, and we encourage further efforts in this regard.

Fourthly, in respect of the role of the General Committee, we support the formalization of the new arrangements introduced by the President of the Assembly at the beginning of the fifty-eighth session.

In sharing these brief reflections at this stage of our deliberations, I wish to close, Mr. President, by once again commending you for the initiative and determination you have shown on this question. You and all the members of the Assembly may be assured of the continued support and cooperation of the delegation of Guyana.

Mr. Ayari (Tunisia) *(spoke in French)*: Tunisia is pleased to participate in the important debate that brings us together today and to make its contribution to international efforts to enhance United Nations action and its performance in the context of the noble principles upon which it is based. We welcome the personal commitment of the Secretary-General and your determination, Mr. President, as well as the commitment of all Member States to strengthen the role of the United Nations and its principal organs — in particular the consolidation of the role and credibility of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security and the revitalization and consolidation of the role of the General Assembly in the service of peace, security and development.

Today, accelerating reform implementation is more necessary than ever in view of the number of challenges we all face and the need to find more viable and lasting solutions to problems related to peace, security and development, which daily confront the

entire international community. Today's discussion is therefore of particular importance and should enable us to think in more depth about new approaches which will let us regain the spirit of multilateralism that characterized the Millennium Summit.

My delegation completely endorses the statements made by the representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of Algeria speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. We would like to emphasize, however, a few points we believe deserve particular attention.

Reform is a comprehensive undertaking that must involve all structures of the United Nations, as the Secretary-General observed in his report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration (A/58/323) and in his speech to the Assembly (see A/58/PV.7), in which he said that the time had come for radical reform and asked Member States to delay no longer in instituting reforms envisaged for the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Trusteeship Council. We support the proposals put forward by the Secretary-General in his report as well, Mr. President, as the ones in your non-paper. We give particular support to the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a panel of eminent personalities to advance the reforms. We feel it is essential that the choice of those personalities reflect the broadest possible geographical representation and respond to the indispensable prerequisite of neutrality.

We would also like to emphasize that no reform may be considered without being submitted to the General Assembly for its prior approval. Moreover, the reforms should be fundamental in nature and in keeping with the principles of the Charter; they should give greater weight to the action of our Organization and its decisions and recommendations than to economizing or to placing unjustified pressure on the agendas of the General Assembly and the other principal organs.

The envisaged reform must confirm our shared commitment to promote effective multilateralism which will make it possible to resolve world political problems in a more just and equitable manner, thereby ensuring the advent of an economic and social order in which all countries can live in security and dignity and enjoy the benefits of globalization.

We would like to reiterate in particular how important it is to make the Security Council more democratic, as it is the principal organ entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security. No reform of the Organization will be complete until the membership of the Security Council is reconfigured, its efficiency and credibility are enhanced and its working methods and decision-making processes are improved. With regard to the right of veto, my delegation supports the position of the Non-Aligned Movement on restricting the use of the veto to action undertaken under Chapter VII of the Charter. It goes without saying that a positive and constructive attitude on the part of the permanent members of the Security Council towards this issue will be essential.

The General Assembly is the Organization's most universal organ. It must remain the central forum for deliberations and decisions on political questions as well as on economic, social and humanitarian issues. We emphasize the importance of helping the General Assembly regain its full powers and attributes as recognized in the Charter. It is certainly true that since a few years ago the General Assembly has become a more deliberative forum, and that the debates that take place there generate insufficient interest outside of its confines. My delegation supports the proposed reforms in the area of rationalizing the programme of work of the General Assembly and its Main Committees and structuring these around the Millennium Development Goals and the results of the Monterrey Conference and the Johannesburg Summit.

My delegation equally supports the principle of clustering certain agenda items and the submission of consolidated reports on related issues. Biennialization or triennialization of items should be carried out only on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the nature of those items and the aims sought. The Department of Public Information must obviously play a more important role in conveying the activities, recommendations and decisions of the General Assembly through the media. We also support the strengthening of the Office of the President of the General Assembly in order to enable the President to carry out the reform process.

The proposal to consider General Assembly agenda items throughout the year seems to be of interest and should be given some thought. Spreading out the work of the General Assembly in this manner would permit those delegations with limited human

resources to participate more actively in the work of the Assembly.

We attach particular importance to the role of the Economic and Social Council and its impact. We welcome the emphasis placed on the necessity of strengthening that strategic organ mandated to promote coordination and to ensure consistent policies and integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences in the economic and social fields. We also support efforts to intensify partnerships and cooperation between the United Nations and the private sector and civil society. We also call for strengthened relations between the Economic and Social Council and the Bretton Woods institutions.

We support the recommendations put forward in the Secretary-General's report contained in document A/58/395 and entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change".

My delegation believes no United Nations reform can be successful without widespread political will. This is even truer for the General Assembly to which we are dedicated and to the implementation of whose decisions and recommendations we must all commit ourselves in good faith.

Finally, we would like to stress the importance of avoiding reform being motivated only by budgetary reasons. We favour the gradual introduction and systematic evaluation of reforms. The proposed changes and reforms must respond to the objectives of transparency and equity and should not ever weaken the negotiating capabilities of any group of countries or limit basic documentation or the prerogatives and means available to the Secretariat as it works to promote development.

Mr. Sychov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of the Republic of Belarus views with great interest the present format of jointly discussing four reformulated agenda items. In our view, this practice will enable us to consider the theme in a comprehensive and integral manner which should ultimately help us to adopt balanced decisions with a view to implementing specific measures and proposals.

Debates on reform of the United Nations have been under way for more than a decade. Our common starting point was an understanding that the United Nations was lagging behind world events and was

becoming less able to address the new realities. The lack of significant progress on reform of the Organization over the past decade led to a further decline of the international authority of the United Nations and its credibility among Member States. As a result, some countries have chosen to sidestep the United Nations and act unilaterally in solving matters of international concern. This state of affairs undermines the established system of international relations and international law and makes the world less secure. In this regard, the issue of reform of the United Nations is becoming especially acute today.

The situation of United Nations reform largely reflects the existing balance of power in the world. Reform of the Security Council, which is a key element of United Nations reform, might serve as a vivid example. The Republic of Belarus does not doubt the need to redress the imbalance in regional representation on the Council, which infringes on the interests of developing countries. We believe that allocation of additional permanent seats to States representing the three developing regions of Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean is necessitated by contemporary geopolitical realities. But no substantial progress has been made with this issue, as not all States, primarily the most influential ones, are ready to take concrete steps to transform the Council. We consider the successful restructuring of the Security Council to be very important, since failure to reform that organ will give rise to the feeling that it is impossible to reform the United Nations as a whole.

The reform of the Organization is connected with the strengthening of other United Nations Charter bodies, first of all the General Assembly. The main objective in this area is to enhance the efficiency of the Assembly's work. Unfortunately, we have observed the reverse process of late. We consider this a result of the increasing influence of other United Nations entities, specifically the Security Council, on matters that fall under the jurisdiction of the General Assembly. It also happens because the decisions of the General Assembly on both agenda items and matters related to improving its efficiency are not implemented.

In our view, among the various ideas on the revitalization of the General Assembly, particular attention should be paid to proposals such as strengthening of the Assembly's cooperation with the Security Council and other United Nations bodies, increasing the significance of the General Assembly

presidency, improving the consultations of General Assembly President with regional groups and organizations and streamlining the methods and working practices of the General Assembly.

Belarus supports measures to strengthen the status of General Assembly and to reconsider its relationships with other Charter bodies of the United Nations. We should not forget that the General Assembly is one of the main bodies of the Organization, in whose work all Member States take part and which has the right to adopt decisions on practically the whole range of United Nations activities. We are convinced that it is in the interests of all countries to have an influential and effective General Assembly, especially in the context of implementing the functions and powers stated in Article 10 of the United Nations Charter.

Nowadays, there is a widely held belief that not all States can benefit equally from globalization. The economic underdevelopment, poverty, social exposure, illiteracy and perilous diseases inherent in many regions of the world are factors that create propitious breeding grounds for the emergence of conflicts and terrorism. It would not be an exaggeration to say that further delay in tackling the whole range of social and economic problems endangers international peace and security.

In the past, the United Nations has made not a small contribution to the solution of development-related problems. We have no doubt that the United Nations should continue to play such a leading role. In this regard, the Republic of Belarus is profoundly pleased that the United Nations was able to project a strategic vision in this area. At the Millennium Summit the Millennium Development Goals were set, major international forums under United Nations auspices have been held, paths to achieve the goals have been defined and broad international attention has been brought to persistent problems. The next and most important of all steps is the realization of commitments undertaken at these conferences and events.

Although the primary responsibility in implementing development goals rests with the Member States, all of us are entitled to rely on the assistance of our Organization. An active and efficient United Nations involvement in dealing with the issues of development seems improbable without the transformation of United Nations social and economic

sectors or without the elaboration and implementation of new approaches to development.

We see one such approach deserving of praise in the consideration this year of the issue of integrated and coordinated follow-up to the outcomes of the Millennium Summit, the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development by both the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

An important component of the reform of United Nations social and economic sectors is an institutional restructuring of relevant entities of the Organization. We support efforts to consolidate the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) through the provision of the requisite organizational, technical and staff capacity. We find interesting and are ready to consider the proposal of the Secretary-General, made in his report on the work of the Organization (A/58/1), to establish a strategic planning capacity in DESA.

Our delegation shares the opinion, suggested by some States during the general debate of the Second Committee, on the advisability of streamlining the work of the Committee and removing overlapping elements in its activities.

The Republic of Belarus attaches great importance to economic and social matters in the United Nations. To this end, we decided to present the candidacy of our country to the Economic and Social Council at the elections to be held during the current session. If elected to the Council, the realization of the United Nations vision on development, strengthening of the economic and social sector of the Organization and enhancement of the Economic and Social Council's role and its interaction with Bretton Woods institutions would be the areas for our priority action in that body.

I would like to dwell briefly on other reform measures undertaken by the Secretary-General — efforts to improve United Nations activities in the area of public information. Belarus expects that the amount of information products will be expanding and taking into consideration regional specifics. This work should yield an increased interest in United Nations activities on the part of national audiences.

Measures to engage civil society and the private sector on a broader basis in the process of United Nations reform certainly deserve attention. We support meaningful United Nations cooperation with these

structures. However, we believe that this interaction should be organized in such a manner so as not to be detrimental to the basic principles of the United Nations as a universal intergovernmental Organization.

Our delegation takes a positive view of the suggested measures to improve the Organization's planning and budgeting processes, including the consideration of a strategic framework on a biennial basis and the enhancement of the role of the Committee for Programme and Coordination. We are ready to support the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005 that reflects that reform effort.

We also take great interest in the Secretary General's intention, stated in his speech to this Assembly on 23 September, to establish a high-level group with a view to elaborating recommendations on United Nations reform. We hope that serious recommendations on further transformation of the United Nations, which all of us will be implementing together, will be the result of that group's work.

In conclusion, I would like to mention that success in reforming the Organization depends on Member States themselves. To make our planet a safer and fairer world, we, the community of nations, must agree on the future of our Organization. The Republic of Belarus, being a staunch supporter of a comprehensive United Nations reform, is ready for constructive cooperation with interested parties on the whole package of United Nations reform. We see no alternatives to the United Nations central role in the system of international relations.

Agenda item 104

Follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development:

(b) High-level dialogue for the implementation of the outcome of the International Conference on Financing for Development

Note by the Secretariat (A/57/CRP.5)

Draft decision (A/58/L.6)

The President: On 15 September 2003, a note by the secretariat was circulated as document A/57/CRP.5 in English only, containing basic information on regional and intergovernmental organizations, non-

governmental organizations and business sector entities applying for accreditation to the high-level dialogue.

Mr. Andrabi (Pakistan): The list of non-governmental organizations that have applied for accreditation to the high-level dialogue on financing for development was included in document A/57/CRP.5 of 9 September 2003. Among them was a non-governmental organization called International Human Rights Observers, Pakistan, which has not been included in the list contained in document A/58/L.6 which is before the General Assembly for consideration. My delegation would like to inquire about the reasons for the non-inclusion of this non-governmental organization in the list before the General Assembly.

The President: In response to the inquiry by the representative of Pakistan, may I state that document A/58/L.6 contains a list of non-governmental organizations which the President has submitted for accreditation to the High-Level Dialogue on Financing for Development.

Pursuant to paragraph 15 (b) of General Assembly resolution 57/250 of 20 December 2002, interested non-governmental organizations and business sector entities that are not in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council or were not accredited to the International Conference on Financing for Development shall apply to the General Assembly for accreditation following the accreditation procedure established during the International Conference on Financing for Development.

As mentioned in a footnote to that resolution, the accreditation procedure for the International Conference on Financing for Development is set out in General Assembly resolutions 55/245 B and 54/279, which Member States will recall was a no-objection procedure.

As this High-Level Dialogue has neither a bureau nor a preparatory committee, the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session was obliged to provide the necessary information to the General Assembly directly, which he did in his letter of 7 May and 27 August 2003. In the relevant part, the President's letter indicated that, in the absence of any objection by 8 September 2003, he intended to submit the list to the General Assembly for approval. No Member State disputed the procedure set forth in President Kavan's letter. The President of the General

Assembly at its fifty-eighth session received a timely objection from one Member State in accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/250. The name of that organization has been removed from the list.

Mr. Andrabi (Pakistan): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for your explanation. My delegation would like to know the name of the delegation and the grounds given for the objection.

The President: The delegation of India objected, and the grounds for the objection are similar to those contained in the document which I circulated to the Assembly. I do not have a copy with me, but I would be quite happy to make this a document of this House.

In any event, I have been advised that I am not, in fact, required to divulge that information. But I think that, in the interests of transparency, I have communicated to the delegation of Pakistan all the information precedent to the President's arriving at that conclusion.

Mr. Andrabi (Pakistan): Mr. President, my delegation appreciates the transparency with which you have conducted the business of the Assembly. We take note of the fact that the delegation of India has blocked the inclusion of this non-governmental organization (NGO) for having held a demonstration against India's illegal and brutal suppression of the right to self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The non-governmental organization, according to news reports, had demanded that the United Nations play an effective role in the resolution of the issue of Kashmir and for peace in South Asia.

We are disappointed, but not surprised, since it is the longstanding policy of India to stifle those voices that question its gross violations of human rights in Kashmir and elsewhere. As a matter of policy, India bars any international human rights organization from visiting Indian-occupied Kashmir or Gujarat, where last year the State machinery helped the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party in carrying out the massacre of thousands of Muslims.

Let me be clear: Kashmir is not a part of India. It has never been. Security Council resolution 47 (1948) and 80 (1950) state categorically that the final disposition of the state of Jammu and Kashmir will be made in accordance with the will of the people, expressed through the democratic method of a free and

impartial plebiscite conducted under the auspices of the United Nations.

The United Nations and the international community recognize it as a disputed territory. The United Nations has a direct responsibility to help the Kashmiri people realize their right to self-determination.

According to operative paragraph 15 (b) of General Assembly resolution 57/250, the procedure adopted for accreditation of non-governmental organizations at the Monterrey Conference was to be replicated for the participation of non-governmental organizations in the High-Level Dialogue. The procedure for the Monterrey Conference, contained in paragraph 16 of the report of the Preparatory Committee (A/AC.257/6) of 23 March 2003, was adopted by the General Assembly, while resolution 54/279 mandated that, first, the application should be submitted to a committee composed of the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee; secondly, that the Bureau, and not a Member State, would decide, on a no-objection basis, regarding the accreditation of those non-governmental organizations; and thirdly, that the Bureau would inform only the Preparatory Committee.

That procedure did not give a Member State the right of veto. That right was limited to the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee, while the general membership, that is, the Preparatory Committee, was only to be informed.

In allowing India a veto to block the Pakistani NGO, a very dangerous precedent has been created. This can be used by any Member State in future to block the participation of any NGO in the activities of the United Nations.

My delegation attaches great importance to the International Conference on Financing for Development and its follow-up process. We do not want to undermine the high-level dialogue and will therefore not challenge the exclusion of that NGO from the list.

The President: I should like to make it clear, again in the interests of transparency, that this is a matter with respect to which the President ensured that he consulted his legal advisers, in the absence of both a preparatory committee and a bureau, and so the decision which was taken on the basis of the objection

that was made was taken with the best legal advice available to me as President.

I wanted to make that point, because, as we talk about change and as we talk about doing things in a more transparent manner, I did not think that I should just rule this matter off without explaining to the General Assembly the procedure that was adopted. The comments made by the representative of Pakistan have been duly noted.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft decision A/58/L.6, entitled "Accreditation of non-

governmental organizations to the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development".

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft decision A/58/L.6?

The draft decision was adopted (decision 58/509).

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 104.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.