

Statement by Ambassador Munir Akram, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, in the informal meeting of the Plenary to exchange views on the President's draft Outcome Document of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly of September 2005 (A/59/HLPM/CRP.1 Rev. 1)

CLUSTER: STRENGTHENING THE UNITED NATIONS

2 August 2005

Mr. President,

The issues contained in the Section on "Strengthening the United Nations" are an important part of the reform agenda.

Secretariat/management reform

2. I would like to underscore the high importance that my delegation attaches to the process of Secretariat reform to enhance its efficiency. A capable and effective Secretariat is essential for the United Nations to achieve the goals set for it by the member states. The reform process needs to aim at institutional measures that ensure highest standards of professionalism and transparency in the working of the UN Secretariat.

3. We take note of the changes in the revised draft, particularly those that strengthen the role of the General Assembly in the process. However, we also find a number of new proposals which were not a part of either the Secretary General's Report or the previous draft. We believe that the issues of functional nature should be dealt with by the relevant intergovernmental structure of the UN rather than being considered at the Summit level.

4. The United Nations is an intergovernmental organization and, as such, its activities should be member-driven and not secretariat-driven. Only the intergovernmental oversight can result in real Secretariat reform in the long run, given the admitted weakness of the UN Secretariat to address the shortcomings in management. In this regard, we would like to reaffirm the principal role of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative and oversight organ.

5. My delegation believes that the shortage of resources is one of the fundamental issues inhibiting the efficient and effective working of the Secretariat and must be addressed in the context of the Secretariat Reform. The September Summit, therefore, provides a welcome opportunity for our leaders to affirm their commitment to provide adequate resources for the UN to meet its mandated programmes.

6. With regard to the revised draft, we would like to offer a few comments:

- (a) For the proposal granting broad authority to the Secretary General for redeployment of human and financial resources we wish to reaffirm that only the General Assembly is authorized to set the priorities of the Organization and decide on allocation and the reallocation of human and financial resources.
- (b) As for review of the mandates, the General Assembly is already seized with this matter in accordance with the programme planning, budgeting and monitoring and evaluation regulations, relevant resolutions and established procedures. Therefore, any review of the mandates, must be in conformity with current established practice in this regard.
- (c) We agree with the need for greater operational independence for the OIOS; however, such independence also needs to be coupled with its greater accountability to the General Assembly.
- (d) The proposed staff buyout is of operational nature which should be dealt with at the working rather than the summit level.
- (e) We understand the need for a review of the budget and human resource policies under which the UN operates and are of the view that these issues be dealt with in their ongoing intergovernmental consideration.
- (f) We reiterate our insistence on a transparent process of recruitment, placement, and promotion, in particular at the senior and policy making levels.

General Assembly

7. We positively evaluate the additions in the section on the General Assembly, particularly the recognition of the Assembly's role in the process of the codification of international law. We also note that the draft now calls for the "strengthening" of the relationship between the General Assembly and the other principal organs. This, however, is not enough. It is essential to reflect a political decision to halt and reverse the encroachment by the Security Council on the Assembly's prerogatives and functions as well as an explicit acknowledgement of the GA's authority to address all major issues, including peace and security, development and human rights.

ECOSOC

8. In our discussions so far, we sense a wide recognition of the centrality of ECOSOC, given its extensive convening power, in promoting socio-economic development and the need to enable ECOSOC to play its central role in promoting coherence, coordination and implementation of agreements, decisions and commitments by states, institutions, the private sector and civil society to deliver on its Charter mandate. Following consultations, within ECOSOC and the wider membership, I submitted a paper on my own authority as ECOSOC President, to you, Mr. President, outlining some proposals to strengthen ECOSOC.

9. We are happy that the latest version of the draft outcome text also recognizes the central role ECOSOC can play in promoting global policy dialogue on economic, social, environmental and humanitarian fields, monitoring MDGs, serving as a development cooperation forum, undertaking operational coordination, inter alia, through voluntary peer reviews and contributing to post-conflict peace building.

10. We will have to ensure that the decisions reflected in the outcome document on ECOSOC once formally adopted are translated into concrete and coherent policy actions.

First, to transform ECOSOC into an effective policy dialogue platform we will have to encourage greater system-wide participation and devise practical modalities on how this dialogue should be conducted.

Second, we will also need to work on putting in place coherent and effective monitoring mechanisms to review the implementation of the agreed development goals. In this context, ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Meeting could be convened – as a sort of peer review mechanism - to discuss national reports submitted by both recipient as well as donor states on the implementation of national strategies and international commitments.

Third, to serve as an effective development cooperation forum, ECOSOC would need to identify national best practices and problems as identified by the UN country Resident Coordinators system with a view to integrating them into the broader policy debate at the global level. Greater coordination and integration of development activities would unmistakably help improve the quantity, quality and effectiveness of international assistance.

Fourth, although we all approve of the strong nexus between peace and development, we still need to have a greater focus on how timely development support could help in the prevention of conflicts. Clearly, ECOSOC is the institution within the UN system that could best address the prevention of conflicts through development support. Practical modalities need to be evolved to achieve this.

Fifth, it is also time to look in specific terms, and to make conscious efforts, to build on the coordination function of the ECOSOC, as envisaged in the Charter. This should be done with the close involvement of both the intergovernmental as well as the Secretariat components of the system to evolve a coordinated system-wide response mechanism by building on the existing synergies and complementarities. The recommendations made in the CEB Report entitled ‘One United Nations: Catalyst for Progress and Change and the DAD System for Tracking Tsunami Aid’ could provide useful insights for future direction, in this regard.

Security Council

11. The section in the draft document on the Security Council reflects the state of discussions on this important issue. It is no secret that beyond the general agreement on the need for a comprehensive reform of the Security Council, deep differences persist on how this could be best achieved.

Mr. President,

12. Every country, big or small, has a vital national interest and stake in this issue. There are now three draft resolutions on the table, i.e. by the G-4, the African Group and the Uniting for Consensus (UfC). Besides, we have the U.S. proposal, the position of China and other permanent members. If we are to reach the broadest possible agreement, these various positions would need to be reconciled. Member States must have the necessary time and space to evolve such a solution.

13. In this context, we have noted with interest the proposal by H.E. Colonel Qaddafi, the host of the Sirte Summit (circulated as document A/59/876 dated 18 July 2005) which makes clear that “No African state will obtain a permanent seat other than because it is part of the African continent and has the support of Africa. Consequently, any permanent seat or seats that may be obtained will be for the African Union and for the benefit of the continent and, as such, will put an end to all competition for such seats. Competition exists at the moment because every state considers that the seat it is seeking to acquire is for its individual benefit.” This clarification confirms our view that the AU’s approach is fundamentally different from the G-4’s which seeks “permanent membership” for individual states and not for their regions. The approach, as outlined by the Libyan leader’s proposal can be readily accommodated within the UfC’s approach.

14. An essential prerequisite for success in achieving UN Reform is to follow a uniform process on all issues. It is unacceptable that an issue as important as expansion of the Security Council is to be decided by a vote; while consensus is sought on other major proposals in the reform agenda, some of which may be equally difficult or controversial.

15. In our view, the vote which has been threatened by the G-4 is contrary to the General Assembly’s decision that we would reach “widest possible agreement” on “all major issues”. A divisive vote will derail the entire UN reform process and imperil the success of the September Summit. Divisions are already obvious - serious tensions have arisen in Asia, Europe and even Latin America. Now, Africa’s unity is threatened. Most serious of all, it threatens the unity and purpose of the United Nations. And all this to satisfy the narrow interests and ambitions of a few “selfish” states.

16. We believe a very large majority of member states, mostly small and medium states, are fully cognizant of these dangers. Given a free democratic choice, a “truly free choice” devoid of all kinds of pressures and inducements, most member states would prefer to uphold the unity of the Organization not succumb to incentives or intimidation. However, they are not being allowed to exercise that choice freely. The G-4 proposal has put most of the member states in the difficult position of having to choose between power and principle.

Mr. President,

17. This reckless drive by the seekers of power and special privileges, paradoxically under the pretext of reform and democracy, has to be checked before it is too late. Some one has to hold out the red signal to avoid an imminent train wreck.

18. We must ask ourselves some fundamental questions: Is this the kind of reform that was intended to enable the international community to collectively face the threats and challenges of the 21st century? How will a divided and damaged United Nations serve as the forum for effective multilateralism and united action in the face of global challenges?

Mr. President,

19. In order to reach an agreement, it is important to engage in constructive negotiations with an open mind. We should not squander the opportunity for Security Council reform by pushing divisive votes and adopting approaches that would only lead to a dead-end. It is important to build on the points of convergence at this stage. There are many: including the need to enlarge the Council, increase the representation of the developing countries, and improve the working methods and transparency of its work.

Mr. President,

20. We would like to point out that various issues will need to be further elaborated after the September Summit, for example, the Peace-building Commission, Human Rights, Management Reforms, ECOSOC Reforms, GA Revitalization, etc. These could be done through separate decisions evolved by consensus. The September Summit should set up follow-up mechanisms to elaborate these decisions for implementation.

21. We recognize that this draft document remains a 'work-in-progress.' In our view, it has the potential to develop into a substantial outcome reflecting the widest possible agreement on the widest possible number of issues. It would be a pity if this opportunity to improve and modernize the UN is squandered by the ambitions of a few selfish States. History, Mr. President, has placed a heavy responsibility on you. We hope you will do everything possible not only to safeguard the integrity of the reform process but also to preserve the unity of the United Nations.
