



General Assembly

Fifty-ninth session

18th plenary meeting

Monday, 4 October 2004, 10 a.m.

New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Ping (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 8 (continued)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items: reports of the General Committee

Second report of the General Committee (A/59/250/Add.1)

Letter from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences (A/59/351/Add.1)

The President (*spoke in French*): I should first like to draw the attention of representatives to the second report of the General Committee (A/59/250/Add.1).

In paragraph 1 of the report, the General Committee recommends to the General Assembly that an additional sub-item, entitled “Cooperation between the United Nations and the community of Portuguese-speaking countries”, be included under agenda item 56, “Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations”, under heading I, Organizational, administrative and other matters. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include that additional sub-item in the agenda of the current session as a sub-item of agenda item 56 under heading I?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in French*): The General Committee further recommends that this additional sub-item be considered directly in plenary meeting. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to consider this sub-item directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform members that the new sub-item becomes sub-item (t) of agenda item 56.

In paragraph 2 of the report, the General Committee recommends to the General Assembly that an additional item, entitled “Observer status for the Economic Community of West African States in the General Assembly”, be included in the agenda of the current session under heading I, Organizational, administrative and other matters. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include this additional item in the agenda of the current session under heading I?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in French*): The General Committee further recommends that the additional item be allocated to the Sixth Committee. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to allocate this item to the Sixth Committee?

It is was so decided.

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform members that this item becomes agenda item 159.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

In paragraph 3 of the same document, the General Committee recommends to the General Assembly that agenda item 109, "Programme planning", also be allocated to the Third Committee with respect to programme 19, Human rights, of the proposed strategic framework for the period 2006-2007. May I take it that the General Assembly also decides to allocate this item to the Third Committee?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in French*): The Chairmen of the Third and Sixth Committees will be informed of the decisions just taken by the General Assembly.

I now wish to draw the attention of members to paragraph 4 of the General Committee's report. In that paragraph, the Committee took note of the clarification that, in implementing resolution 58/316 of 1 July 2004 to consider item 12, "Report of the Economic and Social Council", in its entirety in plenary, the relevant parts of chapter I of the report that are under agenda items already allocated to the Main Committees will be considered by the Committee concerned for final action by the General Assembly.

The Assembly will now turn its attention to document A/59/351/Add.1, which contains a letter dated 27 September 2004 from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences addressed to the President of the General Assembly regarding a request by the United Nations Administrative Tribunal to meet during the main part of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

Members are aware that, pursuant to section I, paragraph 7, of Assembly resolution 40/243, no subsidiary organ of the General Assembly may meet at United Nations Headquarters during the substantive part of a regular session of the Assembly unless explicitly authorized to do so by the Assembly.

In this connection, may I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to authorize the United Nations Administrative Tribunal to meet during the substantive part of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, on the strict understanding that such a meeting would have to be accommodated within available facilities and services?

It was so decided.

Agenda items 52 and 54

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

Strengthening of the United Nations system

Report of the Secretary-General (A/59/354)

The President (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly will consider, in a joint debate, agenda items 52 and 54.

In connection with agenda item 54, the report of the Secretary-General in response to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations has been circulated in document A/59/354.

I give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Louise Fréchette, to introduce the report of the Secretary-General.

The Deputy Secretary-General: Thank you, Mr. President, for having given me this opportunity to speak to the General Assembly about the relationship between the United Nations and civil society. Two documents are now before the Assembly: the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons headed by former President Cardoso; and the Secretary-General's own response to that report.

As members know, the relationship between the United Nations and civil society is as old as the Charter itself. But in the past decade, there has been an enormous transformation in the nature and importance of the role played by civil society on the global scene. Where once global conferences were largely the realm of Governments, today it would be unthinkable to stage such events without the unique advocacy and mobilization of non-governmental actors. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have always been key partners of the United Nations at the country level, in both development work and in the delivery of humanitarian assistance, but today they are making increasingly important contributions to global policy debates and intergovernmental deliberations in areas ranging from the environment to gender mainstreaming.

Such exponential growth in both numbers and influence has created a range of new challenges for the United Nations. The Secretary-General established the Cardoso Panel to assess and draw lessons from the

interaction of the United Nations with civil society, and recommend ways to improve it.

The Panel consulted widely with Member States and with a range of networks, constituencies and groups. I think that members will agree that its report is an impressive document. It contains well-considered and innovative recommendations that offer a solid basis for discussion and debate. The Secretary-General hopes that his response will assist the Assembly in taking those proposals forward.

The starting point for all of these recommendations is that the United Nations is and will remain an intergovernmental Organization in which decisions are taken by its Member States, and nothing in either of the reports calls that fundamental principle into question. But the Panel makes two important appeals to Member States.

First, the Panel argues that the United Nations must become an even more outward-looking Organization, or in the words of the Cardoso report, a “networking” Organization. That means using its unique convening power to reach out to non-governmental actors, especially where such actors command great expertise or resources relevant to a particular issue. In so doing, the Organization will expand its global reach and influence.

Secondly, the Panel argues that the United Nations needs to do more to connect the global with the local. By this, it means preventing any disconnect between statements and policy discussions in intergovernmental forums and life as it is lived by people in slums, conflict areas and other zones of need throughout the world. The articulation of the Millennium Development Goals has helped to close that gap, since those Goals can guide national strategies, which, in turn, can be implemented by local authorities and community-based organizations. But much more needs to be done so that people can feel that their agenda is the agenda of the United Nations. The Secretary-General welcomes the Panel’s vision, and supports it.

In responding to these appeals, and in adapting our Organization, we are not starting from scratch. Member States have been very creative in developing new forms of interaction with civil society. Round-table and panel discussions, open debates of the Security Council and other such steps are now regular features of the United Nations calendar.

The Panel’s report and the Secretary-General’s response seek to embed, expand and deepen the participation of different constituencies in the work of the intergovernmental bodies. The Secretary-General suggests action in six main areas.

First, the contribution of NGOs in intergovernmental bodies should be built into the regular business of the Assembly. The Secretary-General suggests, for instance, that Member States could hold interactive hearings with NGO representatives before each session of the General Assembly, and before major events, such as next year’s high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS.

Secondly, the Secretary-General will establish a single trust fund in order to facilitate and increase the participation of representatives of NGOs from developing countries. Thirdly, the accreditation process should be improved and simplified by establishing a single system of accrediting and streamlining certain aspects of the process. Fourthly, the Secretariat’s own dialogue with NGOs at Headquarters should be improved, including by giving them easier access to information and documentation.

Fifthly, engagement with NGOs at the country level should likewise be intensified, including through better and more regular interaction with the resident coordinators, and through steps to strengthen the capacity of local NGOs. Sixthly, the new Partnerships Office should be tasked with ensuring greater coherence among the disparate units within the Secretariat that currently interact with different constituencies.

Taken together, the proposals of the Panel and the Secretary-General aim to strengthen the United Nations, enrich intergovernmental debate and, most importantly, improve the services that we provide to the world’s people. They are the results of very broad consultations among a full range of stakeholders — governmental and non-governmental. It goes without saying that the implementation of the Assembly’s decisions can move forward only with the cooperation of all concerned. The Secretary-General hopes that members will give positive consideration to the recommendations he has placed before them, and that they will be able to reach agreement by the end of the fall session.

The contribution of civil society groups to the United Nations has been invaluable. The time is right

to take this partnership one step further for the benefit of this Organization and the people whom it was created to serve.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Deputy Secretary-General.

Mr. Van den Berg (Netherlands): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Serbia and Montenegro; and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

Let me first of all thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her introduction to this debate and in particular for her introduction of the report of the Secretary-General in response to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations (A/59/354).

The European Union welcomes the opportunity of this joint debate. It underlines the need to address both the strengthening of the United Nations itself and the strengthening of its intergovernmental structures. With 25 member States, the European Union represents 13 per cent of the United Nations membership. The EU member States contribute more than 36 per cent of the regular budget of the United Nations and make about 50 per cent of all voluntary contributions to United Nations funds and programmes. It goes without saying that the EU attaches high priority to an effective and efficient United Nations system.

In the view of the European Union, the United Nations is uniquely placed to provide the framework for international cooperation. It has no substitute in the international community. But the Organization has to adapt to changing conditions, and that requires reform, not for reform's sake, but in order to make the United Nations stronger.

The European Union considers the United Nations high-level event of September 2005 a logical culmination point to agree on change and implementation. The event will review the progress made in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and related goals in the field of peace,

governance and development, the progress made towards reaching the Millennium Development Goals, and the follow-up to the major economic and social conferences and summits on the strengthening of the United Nations. At a later date in the plenary, we will have a more in-depth discussion on the precise objectives and modalities of the summit.

Our statement will address three issues related to today's debate.

First, we will assess the efforts of the Secretary-General in strengthening the Organization, taking as benchmarks in particular his far-reaching proposals of 1997 and 2002; secondly, we will focus on the concrete tasks before us to further streamline and strengthen the work of the General Assembly; and, thirdly, we will give the European Union's preliminary views on the so-called Cardoso report on relations between the United Nations and civil society.

In general terms, the European Union is of the opinion that the Secretary-General, sometimes in the face of opposition by Member States, has managed to introduce courageous and constructive changes to the Organization. Still, a great deal more needs to be done, and Member States need to fully support the Secretary-General in achieving further necessary reforms.

In the area of intergovernmental reform, for which Member States bear primary responsibility, only limited progress has been achieved. Proposals often have been met with resistance or with suspicion. The Secretary-General has often been reluctant to give his advice on intergovernmental reform, but, possibly, proposals from his side could help to speed up the process.

Let me touch upon the institutional side of United Nations reform. Many important initiatives have been taken by the Secretary-General since he took office: the "Renewing the United Nations" report in 1997; the Brahimi report in 2000; and, most recently, the "Strengthening of the United Nations" report in 2002. Let us take a moment to review what has been achieved.

All of the Secretary-General's initiatives share a common purpose: streamlining the internal functioning of the United Nations system, in order to ensure that available resources are spent in the most efficient way possible to achieve the goals of the Organization. Thus, we should examine whether the Secretary-General has

managed to markedly improve the internal efficiency of the United Nations since 1997. Let us take a look at the progress made in some of the main areas featured in the reports of the Secretary-General.

With respect to the rationalization of the United Nations system, today we see a more logical structure of the United Nations. Departments have been grouped together, common themes have been identified, and the creation of systemic linkages such as the Chief Executive Board have improved communications within a sprawling Organization.

At the country level, many previously separate activities have been consolidated through the establishment of shared offices and a stronger Resident Coordinator position. The United Nations is increasingly using shared tools such as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and the Common Country Assessment.

As concerns peacekeeping operations, there is now movement towards a clearer, more concise planning process, aimed at improving the deployment of peacekeeping operations. However, further improvements are needed.

In the area of human rights, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has moved forward with actions to improve both its internal management and the services it provides to Member States. Protecting, promoting and supporting human rights at the country level remains a priority. The European Union fully supports the efforts of the Office of the High Commissioner to strengthen human rights-related United Nations actions at the country level based on Action 2 of the Secretary-General's "Strengthening of the United Nations: An agenda for further change".

We welcome the efforts of human rights treaty bodies to streamline reporting procedures. The importance of an effective Commission on Human Rights as the pre-eminent body for the protection and promotion of human rights is crucial, in particular in the light of new threats, challenges and changes.

Turning to human resources management, measures such as better human resources planning and greater adaptability for the Secretary-General as concerns the staffing table are clear steps to better manage the Organization's most valuable asset: its staff.

Regarding the budget cycle, we have seen adaptations — although in small steps — to the unwieldy budget process. Slowly but surely, the budget process is becoming better equipped to link the Organization's resource to its priorities. The adaptation of the principles of results-based budgeting is a further positive development.

All this is still a work in progress. There is still a great deal of overlap in the activities of separate United Nations bodies. Integrated planning at the Headquarters level still needs significant improvement. The level of United Nations cooperation in the field varies greatly per country, and many human resource management instruments remain archaic by modern standards. Several necessary changes to the budget cycle are long overdue. The concerns of the European Union regarding many of these matters are well known to all.

However, let us be frank. Much still needs to be done, but we are further along now than many in this room anticipated several years ago. The fact that much of the work remains to be done can only be attributed to indecisiveness on the part of Member States. We cannot only look to the Secretary-General for reform. Many of his proposals could have been bold steps forward for this Organization, but we, the Member States, seem too often to prefer the lowest common denominator.

It is now up to us, the Member States, to provide the support and to maintain the momentum for change. We cannot get bogged down in endless debate. The Secretary-General is doing his part; we must not lag behind. The ball is in our court.

The European Union will remain strongly focused on the reform process. This year, several important institutional issues are before us. First, we will have to take decisions on a potentially major overhaul of the safety and security policies of the Organization, both at Headquarters and in the field. The EU looks forward to receiving the Secretariat's report on safety and security and will support appropriate improvements in security measures.

Secondly, we will have to approve the new biennial strategic framework, which will better link resources to the priorities of the Organization.

Thirdly, we must try to improve human resources management. Better mobility of staff, improvement of

management, clarification of contractual agreements, gender balance and rejuvenation of the work force are some of the issues important to the EU.

I have already stated that we, the Member States, need to take an active part in the strengthening of the United Nations. Let me address some issues of an intergovernmental nature, in particular those related to revitalizing the General Assembly itself.

The EU gives its full support to the changes that were agreed upon in resolutions 58/126 and 58/316. We pay our respect to the determination of the previous President of the General Assembly, Julian Hunte, and we will rely fully on your leadership, Sir, to continue this important work.

Resolution 58/316 clearly identified the further work to be undertaken and to be concluded during the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. The key tasks before us are the following.

First, we have to further rationalize the agendas of the Main Committees by biennialization, triennialization, clustering and elimination of items. Recommendations have to be made to the General Assembly in plenary meeting. It has to take a decision by 1 April 2005. The Bureaux have a major responsibility in moving this process forward. The General Committee must play a stimulating role in order to ensure that the General Assembly can take a decision by April 2005.

Secondly, the working methods of the General Committee have to be further improved. Here again, recommendations have to be made to the Assembly for its decision by April 2005. The General Committee should play a more active role in steering and monitoring the effective progress of the Assembly.

Thirdly, the burden of documentation has to be further reduced. There should be core reports highlighting major issues for discussion. This is essential if all delegations are to be in a position to effectively deal with all matters under consideration by the Assembly. The General Committee has been requested to make recommendations to this General Assembly.

Fourthly, the General Assembly will have to make further efforts to streamline the agenda of the plenary. We took some modest steps. We need bolder decisions.

Fifthly, and finally, the EU believes that the General Assembly should streamline the number and the length of the approximately 300 annual resolutions with a view to giving the Assembly more impact.

The EU stands ready, Mr. President, to support you fully in achieving concrete results in the further revitalization of the General Assembly. We call for a transparent but clearly practical process that will lead to visible and effective results.

Obviously, reforming and rationalizing the General Assembly is only one part of strengthening the intergovernmental system. With regard to the Security Council, the EU believes that there is a need for a comprehensive reform to make the Council more representative, more effective and more democratic.

I will now embark on my third issue, the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, A/58/817.

Global policy issues are no longer the realm of Governments alone. The EU, therefore, welcomes the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations as an important contribution to the ongoing debate about giving civil society greater opportunities to contribute to the work of the United Nations. The EU thanks the Secretary-General for his recent report contained in document A/59/354 in response to the report of the Panel under the chairmanship of Fernando Henrique Cardoso. The EU agrees with the Secretary-General that the world today is remarkably different from the one in which the United Nations was founded nearly 60 years ago.

In order to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, the United Nations must become a more outward-looking Organization. It must become more grounded in reality. Nothing can serve this purpose better than closer interaction with civil society.

The EU welcomes the broad vision of the Panel and believes that the proposals of the Panel and the Secretary-General form a good basis for our discussions. We favour innovative forms of interaction with civil society, including hearings before major policy-setting events. Such hearings should be focused, in order to provide input into our debates. We should also look into the possibility of allowing non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to take part in certain debates of the General Assembly.

We share the Panel's view that the accreditation process for NGOs is in need of streamlining. The EU sees merit in introducing elements of greater coherence and predictability into processes for accrediting NGOs to various United Nations bodies and conferences, with pre-screening of NGO applications by the Secretariat. We would welcome a role for the General Assembly in this process.

The European Union supports the Panel's call for an even stronger participation of civil society organizations from developing countries. We believe that the existing financing mechanisms should be further explored so as to improve their participation. Given the relevant input of women's organizations so far, their participation deserves further encouragement.

The European Union welcomes the steps already undertaken by the Secretary-General to enhance country-level engagement with NGOs. We welcome the Secretary-General's proposal to enlarge the Partnerships Office. In our view, this proposal should be further explored.

The European Union looks forward to a constructive debate on the Panel's report and to an outcome that will effectively enhance the relations between the United Nations and civil society. Civil society and other stakeholders mentioned in the report should be given an opportunity to feed their views and comments into the debate.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize the European Union's full commitment to contribute actively and constructively to the ongoing comprehensive reform process of the United Nations. As stated, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of United Nations bodies, policies and processes is a priority for the EU. We underline the need to strengthen the United Nations institutions. We wish to honour the commitments contained in chapter VIII of the Millennium Declaration. There is clearly a window of opportunity for change and improvement — a window that may not remain open indefinitely. The high-level meeting of September 2005 may well be a decisive moment for substantial change. We would be rightfully blamed if we were to miss that opportunity.

Mr. Dauth (Australia): It is my privilege to speak on behalf of Canada, New Zealand and Australia in this joint debate on agenda item 52, "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly", and agenda item 54, "Strengthening of the United Nations system". In that

context, I would like on behalf of Canada, New Zealand and Australia to join with our friends from the European Union in thanking most sincerely our friend the Deputy Secretary-General for her helpful introduction this morning to the Cardoso report.

Mr. President, the efforts of your predecessor, Julian Hunte, helped impart new energy into the process of revitalizing the General Assembly, which had, frankly, produced rather little in recent years. Two resolutions emerged, as members know, containing a few useful steps and some valuable principles, but we will need to advance the process again during the fifty-ninth session and beyond if we are indeed to revitalize the General Assembly.

As our delegations have said many times before, the fundamental cause of the malaise in the Assembly is an overloaded, outdated, repetitive and often irrelevant agenda. The decision in our last resolution to arrange the agenda according to the priorities of the medium-term plan is promising and can help us to streamline our work in a manner that will make the Assembly a more effective and relevant body in the interests of all Member States. The Main Committees should be rigorous and bold in the task of making recommendations for rationalizing items before 30 April 2005. They should clear away the detritus of years past and create space to address the contemporary challenges facing us all.

This year, we must also act to stem the vast flow of documents. There seems to be wide agreement that the United Nations produces far too many documents — at the behest of Member States — and that many of them are never read, but we have not yet acted. The idea that the President and Main Committee chairpersons would consolidate reporting requests at the end of each session is worth trying, and each of the Main Committees should curtail the quantity of documents they request. They could look at that in conjunction with their review of the agenda. A similar exercise is needed in the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiaries.

Finally, we must use the General Committee to manage more rigorously and effectively the work of the Assembly. Australia and New Zealand are members of the Committee this session and we look forward to assisting in that task.

Canada, New Zealand and Australia appreciate the work of the Secretary-General and his Panel on

United Nations-Civil Society Relations for their work on expanding and deepening the relationship between the United Nations and civil society.

As civil society organizations have grown in their scope and responsibilities at the global and local levels, they have become ever more important actors, possessing expertise, enthusiasm and networks across the global agenda. Participation by non-governmental organizations in intergovernmental processes can lead to better decisions, better outreach and more effective implementation, and collaboration with non-governmental organizations on the ground is essential for achieving our collective goals in development, humanitarian assistance and peace and security.

We therefore agree wholeheartedly with the Secretary-General that the United Nations and its major organs will benefit from interacting more extensively with civil society, and it is timely to consider how the Organization can best do so, rather than to continue as we presently are, on an ad hoc basis.

We look forward to discussing the proposals contained in the report in more detail at a subsequent time and would appreciate your advice, Sir, on how we will proceed. For now, I simply wish to comment on four of the proposals before us.

First, the Secretary-General's proposal to allow non-governmental organizations to participate in the work of the General Assembly could be another step on the path of revitalization. Without detracting from the fundamental, intergovernmental character of the Assembly, a greater dialogue with non-governmental organizations in formal and informal settings would be of value. We would, of course, need to define carefully the rights and responsibilities that we extend to non-governmental organizations. I note particularly the remarks of the Deputy Secretary-General in that context.

Secondly, the proposal for a single accreditation process, with a greater Secretariat role in screening applications for intergovernmental review, would be a sensible and welcome reform. Rather than maintaining different standards for the participation of non-governmental organizations in each intergovernmental body, a single system would be simpler and more efficient. If the General Assembly were to assume responsibility for conducting that process, then the

General Committee would be the appropriate body to exercise the necessary functions.

Thirdly, we note the recommendations for strengthening links between the United Nations and national parliaments, but, like the European Union, are not convinced that the methods proposed are the most appropriate for engaging with parliaments. A mechanism already exists in the form of the relationship between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and we believe that it would be more appropriate to work within existing arrangements wherever possible, rather than to establish new mechanisms and processes.

Fourthly, the enlargement of the Partnerships Office appears to be a good institutional initiative to extend relations with non-governmental organizations and we look forward to considering the details of the proposal in the 2006-2007 budget.

Strengthening the United Nations is, of course, a process that has many aspects, and it is worth recalling here the importance of continuing progress towards making the Secretariat more effective, efficient and results-oriented.

The modest refinements to the budget process agreed last year were much less than Canada, New Zealand and Australia thought were necessary, but we are pleased to see that they have helped the Secretariat to prepare a more focused work plan for 2006-2007 and that some duplication has been eliminated. However, I have to say that we were disappointed — frankly, surprised — that the Committee for Programme and Coordination failed to reform itself and remains of negligible value. We need to keep working on that.

Results-based budgeting — an innovation from the Secretary-General's first round of reforms — continues to progress and is producing a greater focus on results and performance. Two steps are needed to take this further. First, a system of cost accounting will allow the Organization to tie results to resources and to determine how limited resources will be best utilized. Secondly, improved evaluation and performance reporting need to provide a stronger framework for accountability, improving results and better planning.

Finally, continued reform of human resources policies and practices is vital for strengthening the Organization and we must continue to consolidate and

extend the reforms introduced a few years ago. The work of the International Civil Service Commission on reviewing pay and conditions, strengthening performance and improving the management capabilities of managers is critical to the task of ensuring that the Organization can meet the challenges facing it.

In that regard, we welcome the report of the panel on the strengthening of the international civil service and look forward to building on its recommendations to improve the contribution of the International Civil Service Commission to the United Nations system.

Mr. Baali (Algeria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Working Group on Reform of the United Nations and Revitalization of the General Assembly. I shall limit my intervention to the question of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

NAM would like to express once again its appreciation for the leadership and commitment shown by the former President of the General Assembly, Mr. Julian Hunte, concerning the issue of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. Indeed, resolutions 58/126 and 58/316 — adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 2003 and 1 July 2004 respectively — represent important steps for more substantive improvements towards a genuine revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

NAM is confident, Sir, that, under your presidency and with your wise guidance, Member States will continue their efforts to advance the process of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. NAM would like to recall that that ongoing process is aimed at enhancing the authority and role of the Assembly and at improving its efficiency and effectiveness so as to make it the central body of the Organization, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and paragraph 30 of the Millennium Declaration.

NAM looks forward to the follow-up to the provisions of resolutions 58/126 and 58/316. In that context, NAM stresses the need to ensure the effective, full and proper implementation of those resolutions. NAM stresses that the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly is a process, driven by Member States, that entails transparency and a clear distinction between the role of Member States and that of the Secretariat. The consultations on the revitalization of

the work of the Assembly should be conducted in an inclusive manner, taking into account the views of the full membership, including those of the regional and negotiating groups.

NAM is of the view that the focus of our work during the fifty-ninth session should be on continuing the revitalization process within the framework of resolution 58/316. In that connection, NAM would like to highlight the following points.

First, with regard to reordering the work of the General Assembly, NAM stresses the need to take into account the views expressed and the suggestions made by Member States in the context of the deliberations held during the fifty-eighth session.

Secondly, regarding the organization of the agenda of the Assembly under headings corresponding to the priorities of the medium-term plan or the strategic framework, NAM would like to reiterate its position that that arrangement — which is to be reviewed in its entirety by the Assembly at its sixty-first session — is solely for the purpose of illustration and will neither prejudice nor adversely affect the way in which the work of the Assembly is organized and carried out, particularly regarding the format of sessions, the way in which agenda items are considered in plenary and other meetings and the way in which draft resolutions are introduced and action is taken on them.

Thirdly, concerning the practices and working methods of the Main Committees, NAM emphasizes that all of the Main Committees must be bound by the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, as stated in section C, paragraph 3, of the annex to resolution 58/316, and that all Member States must be actively involved in the process of implementing the various provisions of that section, including paragraph 3 (a), which states that each Main Committee shall make recommendations on the rationalization of its future agendas to the plenary Assembly for its decision by 1 April 2005.

Finally, with respect to documentation, NAM is of the view that the forthcoming discussions on that issue should be conducted in the light of the implementation of paragraph 7 of resolution 58/126 and paragraph 20 of resolution 57/300 and in accordance with the principle of providing adequate and sufficient information, as agreed by Member States.

NAM trusts, Sir, that under your presidency, the General Assembly will continue its efforts to ensure full implementation of the provisions of resolutions 58/126 and 58/316 — including those related to the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council, contained in section A of the annex to resolution 58/126 — thus enabling the Assembly to play its role effectively as “the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative body of the United Nations”, as stated in the Millennium Declaration.

Bearing in mind that the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly is an ongoing process that has as its main objective restoring the authority of the Assembly, NAM stresses the importance of paragraph 1 of the annex to resolution 55/285, which stipulates that:

“Improvement of the procedures and working methods of the Assembly is only a first step towards more substantive improvements in and revitalization of the Assembly.”

NAM believes that, from a methodological point of view, it would be more appropriate to focus during the current session on the implementation of resolutions 58/126 and 58/316 and to address, as a matter of priority, all outstanding issues.

At its sixtieth session, the General Assembly will review the whole issue in the context of its consideration of the comprehensive report requested from the Secretary-General in paragraph 3 of resolution 58/316. Such a review will provide Member States with an opportunity to take stock of what has been achieved and to consider further steps and new measures that they deem necessary to advance the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

In closing, NAM would like to assure you, Mr. President, of its full support for your undertaking concerning the issue of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Rio Group: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela and my own country, Brazil. For the Group, the issue of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly is a priority, as agreed by the Presidents of our member

countries at their summit held in Cuzco, Peru. In the light of that mandate, the Rio Group actively participated in the negotiating process leading to the adoption of resolutions 58/126 and 58/316.

Permit me, Sir, to express the Group’s appreciation for the efforts of your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, who, through his tenacity and dedication, gave fresh impetus to the process of the revitalization of the work of the Assembly and made an essential contribution to the success achieved. Thanks to his steadfast commitment to that cause, it was possible, among other things, to continue the effort of biennializing and triennializing the consideration of Assembly agenda items, to bring forward the election of the Bureaux of the Main Committees and to have an agenda organized according to the priorities in the medium-term plan. We are confident that, under your presidency, we shall be able to make yet more progress in that process, which is an essential part of the overall United Nations reform effort. The General Assembly must recover the ground it has lost.

Despite our best efforts during the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, it was not possible to reach agreement on one of the main proposals under consideration, namely, the better use by the Main Committees of all the time available throughout the Assembly session. Given the restrictions on reconvening the Main Committee sessions and the resistance to having some of the Main Committees hold their sessions in the spring instead of in the fall, among other issues, it proved impossible to reach a consensus. Nonetheless, resolution 58/316 kept the issue on the Assembly’s agenda and, as in the past, the Rio Group will continue actively to strive for results that allow for a more effective allocation of available time for the holding of the meetings of the Main Committees.

Paragraph 5 in part B of the annex to resolution 58/126 states,

“It would be advantageous for the General Assembly to have a shorter agenda to ensure the fullest discussion of all issues, so that its decisions may have greater impact.”

One option that could be considered in greater depth is the idea of differentiating the agenda of the General Assembly in general from its programme of work for each specific session, thus avoiding the need to eliminate items from the agenda. Further efforts are

also needed to ensure that the resolutions adopted by the Assembly are more concise, to the point and action-oriented, in keeping with that resolution.

The General Assembly now has to deal with some delicate questions about which it was not possible to reach agreement during the fifty-eighth session. The results achieved so far, however, indicate that, regardless of the obstacles, it is possible to make changes that have a direct bearing on the work of our Assembly. As previous experience clearly indicates, resolute and dedicated guidance from the President is crucial if tangible results are to be achieved in the revitalization process. In this regard, we are very pleased by your statements, Mr. President.

With regard to the strengthening of the United Nations system, we have before us reports prepared by the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, chaired by Fernando Henrique Cardoso, former President of Brazil, as well as the report that the Secretary-General has prepared in response to it. We stand ready to consider the proposals contained in both of those documents throughout the session.

Among the proposals presented, we are pleased to note the Secretary-General's decision to create a fund, to which voluntary contributions could be made, to help representatives of non-governmental organizations from developing countries to attend intergovernmental meetings. The Rio Group will take part in the discussions on that issue, always bearing in mind the goal of promoting this integration in a manner that helps to strengthen the work of the Organization and other intergovernmental bodies.

You may rest assured, Mr. President, of the unswerving support of the members of the Rio Group in your efforts to promote the common cause of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

Mr. Rahman (Bangladesh): The issue of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and the strengthening of the United Nations system has been under discussion at the United Nations for several years. Some progress has been made but, obviously, much more needs to be done.

Certain broad-based perceptions circumscribe any consideration of the reform of the United Nations, whether the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly or the strengthening of the Security Council.

One extreme view is that the work of the United Nations has been essentially reduced to three elements: peacekeeping, the coordination of humanitarian assistance and easing the passage of globalization. Another view is that the United Nations today has latent strengths that have indeed made it indispensable, not the least of which are its universality of membership and its extraordinary position as the central — indeed, the only — body for the cooperative management of the world's problems.

Another set of perceptions relates to the practical realization of what is achievable — that is, realpolitik. This revolves around the question of embarking on a process of radical change involving the amending of the Charter or simply maintaining the basic status quo through the so-called tinkering process to address issues of budget reform, streamlining the administration, et cetera.

It would appear that realpolitik has a hugely constraining hand. Be that as it may, Bangladesh believes that the issue of the revitalization of the General Assembly and the strengthening of the United Nations system cannot be set aside. It is vital that we forge ahead simultaneously in a number of areas. We can accomplish this through a concerted effort on the part of Member States. Agreeing to discuss item 52 and item 54 together is an important step in the right direction. We could explore similar opportunities in the work of the Main Committees through biennialization, triennialization, clustering and the elimination of agenda items. That would allow for more focused and in-depth discussions on issues of relevance, resulting in actionable outcomes.

We believe that the practice of holding a "question time" should also be introduced, in the most appropriate manner, in all of the Main Committees. That would enable a dynamic and candid exchange among representatives, United Nations staff, the representatives of the Secretary-General and special rapporteurs.

A key element is to improve the efficiency of the delivery system, particularly at the national level. Appropriate steps should be taken to better manage the human resources of the United Nations, its budgetary process, procurement procedure and monitoring and evaluation system.

We fully agree with the view that much of the current malaise in our system is due to an

overcrowded, repetitive and irrelevant agenda, a huge burden of documentation and the need for meaningful thematic focus on specific issues.

We believe that rationalization should be a continuous process, enabling the Member States to refocus themselves to respond adequately to changing realities. We are confident that the ongoing process will render the Assembly the central and supreme deliberative and policy-making body of the United Nations.

Bangladesh has been consistently endeavouring to contribute to this process in its modest way. As Chairman of the Second Committee for the fifty-eighth session, Bangladesh, along with the Bureau members, helped prepare recommendations for ensuring a more practical and coherent organization of work for future sessions of the Committee, allowing for better focus, visibility and participation. Many of those suggestions are reflected in section C of Assembly resolution 58/316.

We believe that in order to strengthen the United Nations system, the General Assembly should be made the focal point of our activities. Both the Charter of the United Nations and the Millennium Declaration refer to the central position of the Assembly.

At its fifty-eighth session the Assembly adopted a resolution inviting the Security Council to submit special, subject-oriented reports to the Assembly on issues of international concern. It asked the President of the Security Council to regularly brief the President of the General Assembly on the work of the Council and requested the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council to meet periodically with a view to ensuring increased cooperation, coordination and complementarity of the work programmes of the three organs. We urge the President of the General Assembly to put those recommendations into practice. We also call for further strengthening of the office of the President of the General Assembly, including the increase and the better management of its budget.

The United Nations has seen a dramatic evolution over more than five decades. Two forces have been pre-eminent. The first is mass awareness of individual rights, which is behind the progressive development of humanitarian laws and the strengthening of human rights. Secondly, advances in science and technology have brought the liberalization of market forces,

mobility of labour, capital and business and the greater independence of all countries. The result has been globalization. Those forces have heralded new players in the international community: civil society, non-governmental organizations, transnational corporations and big cities. In short, this is the age of the non-State actors. There is a vital need to praise and assess their role.

For the United Nations to engage in debates on development issues in a more substantive way, we believe it must nurture a healthy relationship with civil society. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) today have a huge worldwide network. They are working with Governments at most levels of development, including planning and execution. The United Nations can certainly benefit by drawing upon the experiences of the NGOs.

We agree with the recommendation of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations (A/59/354) that the United Nations, in essence, should endeavour to make itself a more outward-looking organization. That can be done by encouraging the participation of various stakeholders in the development programmes in different ways. We believe that the role of the NGOs in the activities of the General Assembly, the Main Committees and the Security Council, however, should remain limited to a consultative role.

On the issue of reform of the Security Council, Bangladesh favours increasing the membership of the Council with a view to its democratization and in keeping with the increase in the United Nations membership. A simple rule of thumb is 10 per cent of United Nations membership. We believe that reform of the Council should be considered as a common package encompassing both the composition of its membership and its working methods. Our basic stand is to oppose the creation of new centres of privilege and to constrain the use of the veto, while recognizing the limitations in that direction. That view emanates from the realization that the fundamental goal of the reform exercise should be to enhance the legitimacy, credibility, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness of the Council.

Efforts at reform, particularly the expansion of the Council, should not be bound by any imposed deadline. We believe that any such expansion should be addressed on the basis of well-defined criteria, the

foremost of which should be the track record and performance of the aspirant. That would be judged by the concerned country's commitment to the United Nations and its contribution to international peace and security, not merely by the benchmarks of national wealth and military power. That should ultimately translate into Member States taking greater responsibility in terms of financial resources and political support for efforts undertaken by the United Nations in the areas of peace, security and sustainable development.

Certain aspects, including a country's record in democracy and compliance with the United Nations resolutions, as well as its avowed commitment to disarmament, should also be taken into consideration.

Any reform of the Council should adequately reflect the interests of the smaller developing countries, which constitute a strong numerical block in the United Nations and therefore have a vital stake in an effective Council. In that regard, the case for the democratization of the Council should not be confined to the principle of regional representation alone. It should also include the principle of the rotational representation of various economic groupings in an expanded Security Council.

Arguably, the whole issue of reform of the Security Council involves many complexities that cannot be resolved in a piecemeal fashion. The ultimate aim of any reform exercise should be to enhance the credibility and the democratic nature of the United Nations through its working methods, its decision-making process and the very substance of its deliberations. It should not result merely in the creation of new centres of privilege.

Mrs. Musiviye (Namibia): Last Friday, the General Assembly concluded a rich general debate that was addressed by an impressive number of heads of State or Government. All collectively reaffirmed the precious ideals, purposes and principles of the United Nations and the need for United Nations reform to reassert the centrality of the United Nations in dealing with global problems.

It is therefore most appropriate that the present joint debate should start our plenary deliberations. Having had the rare privilege of presiding over the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, Namibia attaches great importance to this discussion. The revitalization of the General Assembly and the

strengthening of the United Nations system are complementarity and intertwined. A revitalized General Assembly will make the United Nations system effective. At the same time, a strengthened United Nations system will enhance the centrality of this important organ.

I wish to join others in commending the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session for his devotion to the issue of the revitalization of the Assembly. His commitment has taken this important issue to a higher level. It is now our duty to sustain the momentum and to bring the process to a meaningful conclusion.

We trust in your ability, Mr. President, to take the process forward, and you have our cooperation and support in this regard.

The representative of Algeria, speaking on behalf of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), clearly laid out the NAM position. My delegation associates itself with the position he just enunciated. Allow me, however, to make a few remarks on some aspects of the revitalization process. Streamlining the General Assembly agenda has been an ongoing process. In fact, some of the Main Committees have set the pace on the issue. In that context, a focused discussion among Member States will further enhance our work on this subject. In the meantime, the provisions of General Assembly resolution 58/316 are very clear and give us room to observe the practicality and suitability of rearranging the agenda of the Assembly.

We believe that what has worked well for the overwhelming majority of Member States as we continue with the process of revitalization should continue to work just as well. For example, the usefulness and necessity of having a general debate in each of the Main Committees should be viewed in the context of each Main Committee's work. Over the years, smaller delegations such as mine have strongly argued for the retention of this debate. Our arguments have been rightly centred on our limited capacities. However, there is another equally important aspect that we collectively tend to overlook. And since we are deliberating on how to revitalize the work of the Assembly, it is worth pointing out that general debates in the Main Committees are essential for the following reasons. First, they add content to the deliberations; secondly, they provide focus for the work of the

session; and thirdly, they set the overall tone for the Committee's work. The debates on substantive items, on the other hand, narrow it down, thus assisting in the preparation of draft resolutions.

We cannot adopt a uniform method for all the Committees. Therein lies the wisdom of leaving the modalities of rationalizing the work of each Main Committee to its own member States.

We welcome the remarks made by the Deputy Secretary-General in introducing the Secretary-General's report on strengthening of the United Nations system (A/59/354), and we wish to make the following preliminary comments on some aspects of the recommendations of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations.

The contribution of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to the work of the United Nations is unquestionable. In our view, the participation of NGOs is not novel — at least, not for the General Assembly. However, the participation of non-governmental organizations has been unbalanced, in terms both of geographical representation and of accessibility to the United Nations system. Members will agree with me that accreditation and participation of NGOs are two different issues.

My delegation does not concur with the Panel on the merits of a single system of accreditation. Granted, we need to continue to seek more effective ways of carrying out our activities with the inclusion of all relevant partners. However, in doing so, we must examine in earnest whether the problem actually lies with the committee or the NGO, or with the seeming erosion of the intergovernmental character of our Organization.

We believe that, in considering the accountability of NGOs, the particularities of NGOs from developing countries need to be taken into account. It has been said, and rightly so, that different United Nations bodies require different types of reform or strengthening. At country level, for example, unique regulatory frameworks have to be taken into account. The participation of NGOs in operational activities at country level cannot be made uniform. While broad guidelines could be common, surely the modalities of operation will have to take into account the realities in given countries.

There is no doubt that the capacities of NGOs, especially those from developing countries, need to be enhanced to complement Government efforts in the development sphere. However, this must not detract from the fact that what is holding back the attainment of development goals is not a lack of effective coordination between Governments and non-governmental organizations but the lack of resources. The proposed trust fund is thus an idea worth considering. However, in view of the lack of resources for development, would it not be more useful if the trust fund could also complement the efforts of government in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, for example? The operational word here is "complement".

As I mentioned earlier, the contribution of NGOs to the work of our Organization is beyond doubt and is well documented. But, while we welcome their continued participation, we must not compromise the intergovernmental nature of our Organization, which derives from the Charter.

Finally, the revitalization of the General Assembly is the means to an end. During the previous session, the Non-Aligned Movement introduced a draft resolution, adopted as resolution 58/317, on reaffirming the central role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security and the promotion of international cooperation. While we seek to revitalize the work of the General Assembly, we need to establish how to enhance the role of the Assembly in this regard. Improving the working methods of the General Assembly will not in itself place the Assembly at the centre. Perhaps the time is fast approaching for us to look at the authority of this most deliberative and most representative organ of the United Nations.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): Sir, it is my pleasure to congratulate you on your election to the presidency of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. It is particularly gratifying to see a distinguished son of Africa leading this body at such an important session. I wish to pledge the fullest cooperation of South Africa with you in the year ahead.

Please allow me to thank and congratulate your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Julian Hunte, for his effective leadership of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. I wish to pay special tribute to Foreign Minister Hunte for his efforts on one of the

items before us today, namely, the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

I would also like to associate myself with the statement made by Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

My delegation is fully committed to improving the working methods and the effectiveness of the General Assembly, both its Committees and the plenary. We believe that the purpose of the proposed reform is to enhance the effectiveness and the substance of the work of those bodies. For the past couple of years our delegation has had the honour to assist in the facilitation of the revitalization process. During that period we have seen Member States take decisions on a number of issues, which have already made a significant improvement in the work of our Organization. Already, there is a fixed date for the annual commencement of the general debate. The President of the General Assembly and the Chairpersons and other officers of the Main Committees are elected early so that they can prepare for their tasks in good time. The General Committee has also been engaged in discussing and deciding on the revitalization process, giving the General Committee a continuing role in the process of helping strengthen the Assembly.

At its fifty-eighth session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 58/316, in which Member States were able to reach consensus on further reforms designed to revitalize the work of this body. They included the decision to schedule plenary meetings on Mondays and Thursdays, so as to make the work of the whole General Assembly session predictable. That decision has also made it possible for the Committees to better structure their schedules so as to avoid clashes with plenary meetings. In addition, certain Committees have begun implementing some of the proposals made in the resolution as a way of enhancing their work. In coming weeks, we look forward to comparing the revitalization experiences of different Committees as a way of distilling and replicating best practices, wherever possible.

However, there is still more to be done if the General Assembly is to live up to its description in the Millennium Declaration as “the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations” (*resolution 55/2, para. 30*).

Among the outstanding matters raised in resolution 58/316 is the issue of documentation, in particular the volume of documentation. We believe that documentation has a direct impact on the work of the General Assembly and its Committees and my delegation is ready to participate in discussions on that issue.

Regarding the strengthening of the United Nations, we wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report in response to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, which was chaired by the former President of Brazil, Mr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso.

South Africa places a very high premium on the role and contribution that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other elements of civil society can play and have played in many aspects of society. For that reason, we believe that such organizations have an important role to play in analysing, evaluating and shaping the world we live in at all levels. It is therefore important for the United Nations to enhance its cooperation with that very important sector of society; we believe that the report of the Secretary-General contains a number of practical and useful suggestions that should be pursued further.

While it may go without saying, we concur with the Secretary-General’s re-emphasis of the intergovernmental nature of the United Nations, where decisions are taken by its Member States. However, Member States should be able to draw on the best and most up-to-date information on which to base their discussions and decisions; civil society can play an important contributing role in that regard. Civil society also continues to highlight topics and to develop the debate around important local, national and global issues. With that in mind, we agree that ways should be found to maximize the contribution that civil society can make to the work of all the bodies of the United Nations, including the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Speaking from my experience as Chairman of the Economic and Social Council Ad Hoc Advisory Groups on Guinea-Bissau and on Burundi, our interaction with civil society in those countries made a significant contribution to the Economic and Social Council’s understanding of both the challenges faced by those countries and of the different approaches available in dealing with countries emerging from

conflict. I was thus pleased that during its recent visit to West Africa, the Security Council mission also made a particular point of interacting with civil society organizations in the countries that they visited, a fact mentioned in the Secretary-General's report.

While those country-level interactions are extremely helpful, it is admittedly not possible to have the same level of contribution from developing-country civil society organizations in the work of the United Nations here in New York. We are therefore very glad to see that the Secretary-General will create a trust fund to provide financial support to enable accredited NGOs from developing countries to attend United Nations meetings. We hope that donors will contribute generously to the trust fund, as that would be a tangible way to demonstrate the importance that we attach to the contribution of civil society.

We all have seen the significant contribution that civil society organizations can make to the work of the United Nations during summits and other high-level meetings. That was demonstrated very clearly again to us in Johannesburg, during the World Summit on Sustainable Development, in which civil society participated fully both in the preparatory process and the Summit itself. Since the Johannesburg Summit, civil society has continued to contribute significantly to enriching the debate and to discussions on carrying out the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

The Secretary-General has also highlighted the need to find ways to review the accreditation of NGOs as a way to maximize their participation in the work of the United Nations. My delegation believes that this is an important issue, and we look forward to exchanging ideas with other delegations on this matter.

In conclusion, the fact that we are addressing the revitalization of the General Assembly and the strengthening of the United Nations system together is an admission that a lot of work needs to be done. If we consider the agreement reached in resolution 58/316, there seems to be a consensus that we have not yet reached the end of the road of the revitalization process. And in addressing the strengthening of the General Assembly, it is clear that that cannot happen through the efforts of Member States alone. We need to maintain a balance between our enthusiasm to improve the working methods of the Organization and discussions of the actual substantive matters that we have to deal with in the Committees and in plenary

meetings. My delegation believes that that can only happen as we continue to address these issues in the coming months.

Mr. Aboul Atta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, I would like to associate myself with the statement made by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and to endorse the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations. We would also like, once again, to express our satisfaction with the role played by the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session in guiding the consultations that led to the adoption of General Assembly resolutions 58/126 and 58/316. We also look forward to working with you, Mr. President, during the present session on these items.

Egypt is convinced that the major objective of the revitalization of the General Assembly is an important one: to ensure that, in the relevant areas, the Assembly plays its role as a principal organ of the United Nations. We must never lose sight of that objective. Egypt is firmly convinced that the revitalization of the General Assembly must not be short-circuited or limited to a simple procedural rationalization of the Assembly's deliberations. While we attach particular importance to this matter, we also think that we should consider the question of the General Assembly's relationships with the other United Nations organs and develop those relationships in an effort to achieve the most effective formulas that would enhance the authority, efficiency and role of the General Assembly.

At its sixtieth session, the General Assembly will deal with the question of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and the comprehensive reform of the United Nations. That should provide a unique opportunity for us to advance in our collective international action to enhance the role of the General Assembly and strengthen multilateralism and democracy in international relations.

We in the Non-Aligned Movement therefore believe that, at the present session, we should consider carefully the comprehensive implementation of resolutions 58/126 and 58/316 and the elements that have already been implemented. We believe that this work should be transparent and should fully include all the regional and other negotiating groups, based on the principle that it is the Member States that are responsible for reforming the United Nations and, in

particular, for revitalizing the General Assembly. This must take place on the basis of a painstaking definition of the roles of all those involved in the discussions. We will support your efforts, Mr. President, and will cooperate with you as you exercise prudent leadership, in a spirit of partnership and collegiality, to ensure that we succeed in this process.

I turn now to the issue of strengthening of the United Nations system and its relationship with the civil society. We have examined the Secretary-General's report (A/59/354) on this matter, and we listened attentively to the presentation made today by the Deputy Secretary-General. Here, I thank the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, chaired by former President Cardoso of Brazil. My thanks go also to the Secretary-General. Egypt has always sought to strengthen dialogue with non-governmental organizations, not only because of their role in articulating society's conscience, but because of the constructive role they play in promoting the issues of civil society, to the benefit of all people.

Based on the growing importance of this matter of strengthening the role of the United Nations and revitalizing its organs, the delegation of Egypt has studied the report very carefully with a view to its implementation. We wish also to understand all the responsibilities and repercussions stemming from the implementation of the report's proposals on strengthening the United Nations system. We would like to ascertain what the implications will be for our societies and to ensure that we act in a manner compatible with the intergovernmental nature of the Organization and its Charter.

Mr. Noghes (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): The Principality of Monaco welcomed the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 58/316, which was an important first step towards revitalizing the work of the General Assembly. We take this opportunity, Mr. President, to welcome the work done in this area by your predecessor.

The delegation of Monaco supports the effort to reform the United Nations organ in which all Member States may express their views. In the annex to resolution 58/126, the General Assembly reaffirmed that the provisions of the United Nations Charter and the Millennium Declaration lay at the heart of its concerns.

The Monegasque delegation greatly appreciates, in this regard, the rearrangement of the agenda, which is now clustered around headings that correspond to the Organization's priorities. Rationalizing the agenda in keeping with the medium-term plan for 2002 to 2005 or the strategic framework of the General Assembly will give Member States the opportunity to focus their efforts on areas in which they are most competent. Small delegations such as ours will in this way be able to make a more significant contribution to the work of the Assembly.

The measures that we have adopted are nonetheless modest in scope. The General Committee's role needs to be strengthened as regards the effectiveness of the Organization and the coordination and management of its work. The representative nature of the General Committee gives Member States a guarantee that the Secretariat will take their views into consideration.

We warmly welcome the practice of holding interactive debates and group discussions within the Main Committees, as well as question-and-answer meetings involving representatives of Member States, department officials and special rapporteurs. Such informal exchanges of views will promote both dynamism and transparency.

The sense of urgency that should push us to undertake the upcoming measures to revitalize the Assembly is as great as that which in September 2003 prompted the Secretary-General to create the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. The recent and simultaneous upsurge in non-traditional threats such as terrorism, organized crime and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction on the one hand and the insufficient or patchy progress in reducing poverty on the other hand make it necessary for the United Nations to adapt rapidly to the new world context. Like the eminent persons of the Panel, we need to formulate bold proposals, setting out a convincing agenda: a set of responses that can deal with the world's problems. It is up to us to give the General Assembly the authority it deserves and to strengthen the role that falls to it, that of representing the international community and, fundamentally, the peoples of the world.

In that regard, we have taken note of the recommendations made by the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations,

because, as its Chairman, President Cardoso, has noted, the growth in civil society's influence is one of the major events of our time. We share the view that the United Nations should welcome the contributions of relevant non-governmental organizations in the context of their deliberations. We continue to believe that we should be able to avoid repetitive debates and certain repetitive resolutions and to devote ourselves to implementing and honouring the commitments that we have already undertaken.

Mr. President, we are convinced that you will be able to conduct our work successfully and that we will thus make substantive progress before the end of the session.

Mr. Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry (Pakistan): I wish to begin, Sir, by extending to you our congratulations on your assumption of the office of President of the General Assembly and by assuring you of our fullest cooperation during your term of office. We would also like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General for presenting the report of the Secretary General (A/59/354) this morning.

Pakistan fully supports the efforts to revitalize the General Assembly in order to strengthen its role as the chief deliberative organ of the United Nations. However, our efforts will not yield the desired result unless we focus on both enhancing the Assembly's efficiency and restoring its rightful authority.

In that regard, last year Pakistan's delegation presented a set of ideas for the revitalization of the General Assembly. One idea, which continues to remain valid, bears repetition: enhancing the Assembly's role is a political, not a procedural exercise. All Member States would need to demonstrate their resolve and political commitment to ensuring that the Assembly becomes the primary locus of the discussions and actions of the United Nations. The Member States will also need to commit themselves to observing and implementing the Assembly's resolutions.

Pakistan aligns itself with the statement of Algeria made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement countries on agenda item 52. We endorse the call for the provisions contained in resolutions 58/126 and 58/316 to be fully implemented. We believe that consensual decision-making should be the guiding principle in making progress on the important issues under consideration, including reflection of the

priorities of the Organization in the agenda of the General Assembly, the reordering of the Assembly's work, and the working methods of the Main Committees.

We would like to draw the Assembly's attention to an important provision of resolution 58/126, which calls for greater interaction between the Presidents of the three principal organs of the United Nations. We believe that greater coordination and coherence in the work of those three organs will bring synergy to our work and add to the central role of the General Assembly, as envisaged in the Charter and reflected in the Millennium Declaration.

In that context, we welcome the regular meetings of the Presidents of the three organs instituted by the former President of the General Assembly, Mr. Julian Hunte, to discuss issues common to the agenda of the three organs. We would like to take this opportunity to recall Pakistan's proposal of establishing ad hoc composite committees with membership drawn from the three main organs in order to address complex emergencies. That idea has already been discussed at the meeting of the three Presidents. We hope that the proposal will be further reflected upon in the context of bringing about greater vitality and synergy in the work of the three principal organs of the United Nations.

In the context of discussions on agenda item 54, we would like to state that Pakistan attaches high importance to strengthening the United Nations system. In that regard, Pakistan has welcomed the establishment of the High-Level Panel to examine the major threats and challenges to international peace and security and to make recommendations for a collective response. We believe that the strengthening of the United Nations system should be based on cooperative multilateralism pursued mainly through the United Nations and based on United Nations Charter principles. United Nations reform should not come at the cost of United Nations principles.

We shall offer our specific views on different aspects of United Nations reform under the relevant agenda items. At today's meeting, we would simply like to say that cooperative multilateralism and a strengthened United Nations can be realized only if the General Assembly is enabled to play its role as the supreme organ of the Organization, to which the membership of the more restricted organs, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, is

answerable and accountable. Furthermore, the strengthening of the United Nations system cannot yield the desired results so long as the United Nations and its family of organizations continue to be denied adequate financial resources to perform the myriad and growing tasks with which those organizations are now being entrusted.

We would now like to offer a few comments on the report of the Secretary-General on United Nations-civil society relations. Pakistan regards civil society as an integral part of the political, social and economic fibre of contemporary societies. The wider participation of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is now vital to ensuring the success of international cooperation, especially in the field of socio-economic uplift and the advocacy of the rights of the vulnerable segments of societies.

The evolution of civil society in the past decades and its increased participation in United Nations activities warrants a fresh look at the institutional structure if that interaction is to afford a meaningful partnership between the two. It is in that context that, two years ago, the Pakistan delegation extended its full support to the proposal of the Secretary-General, contained in his report in document A/57/387, to strengthen the interaction between the United Nations and civil society.

We have taken note of the proposals made by the Secretary-General in response to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations. The report contains a number of useful ideas and suggestions. However, we believe that the changes that we may institute need our careful consideration, particularly their financial, legal and procedural implications. While we would pursue the matter in greater detail during informal discussions, at this stage we would like to offer a few general observations.

First, there is a need to clearly define the rights and responsibilities of non-governmental organizations for their participation in the General Assembly, bearing in mind the need to preserve the Assembly's intergovernmental nature. Secondly, the process of accreditation must continue to be regulated through intergovernmental consideration and decisions. We agree that there is a need to streamline the accreditation process. In that regard, we would need to evaluate whether the shifting of the responsibility for the accreditation of non-governmental organizations

from the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations to the General Committee would achieve the desired efficiency. Thirdly, due respect has to be shown for the local laws, values and cultural ethos of the country concerned when strengthening role of civil society in United Nations-sponsored activities in that particularly country. Equally important is the need to ensure that programmes to enhance the capacity of NGOs at the country level are undertaken with the concurrence and full involvement of the host authorities. Fourthly, initiatives for the increased involvement of NGOs need to be accompanied by the generation of additional funds, rather than by a mere reappropriation of the existing development funds.

In conclusion, Pakistan supports the strengthening of the relationship between the United Nations and civil society. However, we believe that the exercise should not in any manner erode the Assembly's intergovernmental nature or challenge the primacy of the Member States at the United Nations.

Mr. Zhang Yishan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, allow me to thank you, Sir, for convening today's meeting.

The revitalization of the General Assembly is an important part of the reform of the United Nations. The Chinese delegation has always supported the revitalization of the General Assembly with a view to expanding the influence of the Organization and to promoting multilateralism.

At its last session, the General Assembly unanimously adopted two important resolutions on its own revitalization that fully reflected the common understanding of all parties. We expect that, under your leadership, Sir, the revitalization of the General Assembly will remain a major priority at this session, the healthy momentum will be maintained and further results achieved. The Chinese delegation is prepared to join with every member of the General Assembly in giving its full support to your work.

We are of the view that there already exists a very good foundation framework for the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. The first priority now is to implement resolutions 58/126 and 58/316. In that regard, I would stress the following three points.

First, with respect to strengthening the authority and role of the General Assembly, the annex of resolution 58/126 invites the Security Council to

submit periodically special subject-oriented reports to the General Assembly on issues of current international concern and to continue with initiatives to improve the quality of its annual report to the General Assembly. As one of the permanent members of the Security Council, China will work actively in the Council to accomplish those two tasks.

Secondly, with respect to improving the agendas and documentation of the General Assembly and the Main Committees, in compliance with resolution 58/316, the Secretary-General promptly submitted a General Assembly agenda in document A/58/864, clustering items according to the medium-term plan. We express our appreciation in that regard. We expect the Main Committees to make their recommendations to the Assembly on the rationalization of their agendas before 1 April 2005. We also expect the Secretariat to submit an updated note on control and limitation of documentation to the General Committee for its consideration so that it can make its recommendations to the Assembly at an early date.

Thirdly, in accordance with resolution 58/316, the General Committee should continue to consider the question of improving its working methods and make recommendations on the matter to the Assembly before 1 April 2005. We hope that the General Committee will promptly study this issue and come up with ideas on how to improve its working methods, including ways and means to further rationalize the procedure for considering the agenda of the Assembly so as to improve the Assembly's efficiency and effectiveness.

Next year marks the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations. The General Assembly will convene a summit meeting to commemorate the event and make a number of decisions on important questions. The summit's success depends on careful prior preparations. The current Assembly session faces an enormous task in that regard. In order to revitalize the Assembly, while no effort should be spared to implement resolutions 58/126 and 58/316, we should also give comprehensive consideration to other relevant issues related to the reform of the United Nations in order to promote the revitalization of the Assembly.

The Chinese delegation has also taken note of the report by the Secretary-General concerning the expanded participation of civil society in the United Nations (A/59/354). We thank the Panel of Eminent

Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, under the leadership of Mr. Cardoso, for its efforts. We support the consideration of the expanded participation of civil society, including non-governmental organizations, in the United Nations. We will join others in taking a positive and open approach for the in-depth study of this question.

The Chinese delegation believes that the expanded participation of civil society is necessary for the United Nations to meet the requirements of our age, and the issue should be given thorough consideration in relation to the reform of the United Nations. Reflection on the expanded participation of civil society should fully consider the useful practices and experience of the non-governmental organizations that have participated in the work of the United Nations over the last 60 years. The views of relevant parties, including non-governmental organizations, should be solicited on relevant reform measures, which should be implemented progressively.

Mr. Haraguchi (Japan): Today, the General Assembly is to discuss the critical issues of our time: the strengthening of the United Nations system and the revitalization of the General Assembly. I take it that placing these issues immediately following the close of the general debate indicates the importance that you, Mr. President, attach to the reform of the United Nations. I would like to pay tribute to your initiative in that regard.

With its universal membership and broad mandate, the United Nations plays an important and unique role that no other international organization can fulfil. However, in the face of the new threats and challenges emerging in the international community today, the United Nations system must be reformed and strengthened in order to maintain its relevance and effectiveness. As Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan said in his statement in the general debate on 21 September, we need a strong and effective United Nations; we must, in effect, create a new United Nations for the new era.

In that connection, the work of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change is under way. Its report, expected to be completed this December, will be the product of the collective wisdom of the highly esteemed members of the Panel. We are looking forward to the Panel's insightful analysis of, and innovative suggestions for solutions to, the threats and

the challenges we are now facing. Nevertheless, it is the Member States that have the final responsibility to make political decisions on the ways and means to strengthen the United Nations system. Therefore, it is imperative that we, the Member States, start seriously to consider how best to improve the existing United Nations system and better adapt it to today's needs.

That is a task in which we cannot afford to fail. Unless we succeed, the United Nations will fall behind the times and gradually lose its relevance as an effective organization. It is our responsibility to reform and strengthen the United Nations so that it can effectively fulfil its objectives in the face of such emerging challenges and threats, as terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, poverty, environmental degradation and the spread of HIV/AIDS and other pandemics.

Reforms are needed throughout the United Nations system. Part VIII of the Millennium Declaration lays out the various areas in which the United Nations needs to be strengthened. Among other requirements, the central position of the General Assembly must be reaffirmed; our efforts to achieve comprehensive reform of the Security Council must be intensified; the Economic and Social Council must be further strengthened; and the Secretariat must be urged to make the best use of its resources. Japan is of the view that the core of all our efforts must be the reform of the Security Council. I will elaborate subsequently on our views on those individual issues under the relevant agenda items. Today, I would like to touch upon some issues related to the revitalization of the General Assembly, as well as budgetary and administrative affairs.

The President at the fifty-eighth session, Julian Hunte, regarded General Assembly revitalization as one of the priority issues of his term of office. During his tenure, the Assembly adopted two significant resolutions, 58/126 and 58/316. I welcome the adoption of those two resolutions as a useful step towards the revitalization of the Assembly. What must follow now is for Member States faithfully to implement those resolutions.

Prior to the opening of the current session, we elected the President and the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly, the Chairpersons and the full Bureaux of the Main Committees in early June, as stipulated in resolution 58/126. The transfer of duties

from the outgoing to the incoming bureaux was carried out in an institutionalized manner, with the incoming officials thus enabled to make the necessary preparations for their duties in advance. Therefore, I believe, we have made a good start at the current session in securing the continuity of discussions to take place during future sessions and in maintaining the momentum for further reforms.

During the consultations on those resolutions, we considered the possibility of rescheduling the work of the Main Committees over two substantive periods during the session. We have learned, however, that it would be very difficult to realize such an arrangement. It was pointed out that, because the conferences, activities and events, both at Headquarters and outside New York, are interrelated, reorganizing their working schedules would be an immensely complicated task. Some Member States also argued that the work of the Main Committees should not be separated from the general debate, a point which, I believe, has merit. In order to reduce the congestion of the work schedule, opening the general debate in early September is an alternative that is worth exploring.

What is most urgent and important, however, is the rationalization and streamlining of our work agenda — the key factor in improving the efficiency of our work. I am convinced that not only small-sized delegations, but all of us would benefit from further rationalization and streamlining of the agenda.

In that connection, we are glad that the two resolutions deal extensively with issues concerning the agenda. It is my hope that the new agenda, organized on the basis of the resolutions, will help us to better structure our work and eventually to raise our productivity.

In addition, the General Assembly carried out a long overdue review of the agenda, and the resulting elimination of two agenda items was certainly a good step forward. We need to continue the process of rationalizing and streamlining the agenda. Each Main Committee will work on the rationalization of its agenda during the session. I hope that they will come up with bold and substantive results.

In order to realize a new United Nations for the new era and to steadily implement activities as intended, the United Nations needs the backing of resources. We need firm commitments on the part of Member States to foot the bill for projects and

activities that are agreed to be vital in enabling the United Nations to meet new threats and challenges.

However, it is also necessary to recognize the fact that the capacities of Member States to pay is limited. Therefore, we must ensure that the United Nations further rationalizes its budget through strict prioritization of its activities. Reallocating resources from outdated activities to our new priorities is crucial. It is also essential that the Secretariat be accountable to the Member States regarding the resource requirements for each activity and its performance. It is also important to determine whether the burden is fairly distributed among Member States.

In order for the United Nations to remain an effective system of world governance, the obligations and rights of its Member States need to be balanced. If the United Nations were to be perceived as losing legitimacy and fairness in that respect, it would become difficult to retain the wholehearted support of Member States. In that regard we believe that the current scale of assessments needs to be adjusted to be more balanced, taking into account each country's status and level of responsibility within the United Nations.

The strengthening of the United Nations system requires firm commitment and dedication on the part of each Member State. Japan is prepared to do its utmost in order to make a significant contribution to the process.

Mr. Siv (United States of America): The United States has a long tradition of supporting civil society participation at the local, national and international levels, and in particular, within the United Nations. We welcome the Secretary-General's initiative in establishing the panel led by President Cardoso. We salute President Cardoso for his leadership. In public life he has worked to create an environment in which civil society can flourish; as a private citizen he embodies the power of civil society to promote positive change.

We are studying the report carefully. While it is not possible at this time to respond fully to all suggestions, the United States would like to present its preliminary reactions.

First, we strongly agree that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) provide valuable input into the work of the United Nations. NGOs are advocates and

programme implementers at all levels of society. They bring a grass-roots perspective, which enhances the work of the United Nations in the social, economic and humanitarian spheres. However, a compelling case has not been made that this relationship must be broadened from the Economic and Social Council to the General Assembly.

Consistent with the United Nations Charter, the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies have been — and continue to be — the appropriate venues for the kind of meaningful NGO participation that the report rightly extols. We believe that NGOs have ample opportunities to participate in the functional commissions of the Council, as well as in United Nations conferences under existing arrangements.

The United States requests further clarification on the establishment of a single trust fund for NGOs. That relates in particular to the replacement of established funds, and the legal and funding issues that would arise.

So long as responsibilities are not transferred from the Economic and Social Council to the General Assembly, we warmly welcome any improvements to the NGO accreditation process. We support the proposals to improve the dialogue between the Secretariat and NGOs. We also encourage country-level engagement with NGOs. Initiatives to facilitate the inclusion and implementation of local points of view into the functional commissions should be explored.

In light of the report, we would like to reiterate our support for civil-society participation in the United Nations system through the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies. We agree with the Panel that multi-stakeholder partnerships are an important tool for addressing the challenges before us. While we are still reviewing the specific proposals, we welcome efforts to foster such partnerships. In particular, we acknowledge the innovative work done by the Commission on Sustainable Development in its role as a focal point for partnerships that promote sustainable development.

Mr. Gatan (Philippines): The Philippine delegation is elated, Sir, to note your resolve to give priority to the unfinished task of revitalizing the work of the General Assembly, as mentioned in your

statement at the opening of the Assembly's fifty-ninth session.

May I, at the outset, state that my delegation associates itself with the statement of Algeria, made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, on agenda item 52 on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

The task of revitalizing the work of the General Assembly, entrusted for implementation to the fifty-eighth session as mandated by General Assembly resolution 58/126, was regrettably not fully completed. We managed to partially implement the reforms sought under that resolution. Although resolution 58/126 was a collective product, adopted by consensus, we were unable to fully live up to the commitment made. That could give rise to criticism that we adopted a rhetorical or nonchalant attitude towards the resolution, which could strengthen the belief of critics that we continue to lack a genuine desire to improve and strengthen the General Assembly.

We must prove the critics wrong. We should demonstrate that the General Assembly is not fast becoming irrelevant and ineffective in the discharge of its mandate as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative body of the United Nations, by concluding, during the current session, the full implementation of resolutions 58/126 and 58/316. We must exercise the needed flexibility, and we must not be hamstrung by narrow national or group interests.

The principle that form follows function should always guide us in revitalizing the work of the General Assembly. The test of the relevance and effectiveness of working methods is whether or not they contribute to the effective and efficient performance of goals and objectives.

A salient substantive point of consideration on the work of the General Assembly — a past concern that continues in the present — is the implementation of many resolutions. The General Assembly has a brilliant record of producing resolutions and decisions, but, as regards the implementation of those resolutions, its performance does not seem encouraging.

Our agreement to simplify the formulation of resolutions — which henceforth will be terse and action-oriented — is an example of how form follows function. My delegation hopes that, as a result of this agreement, our future resolutions will be so simplified

that they will enable the general public to understand what we decide here and to assess whether we did what we promised to do. This guide aimed at improving the quality of resolutions so that our peoples — who are ultimately the beneficiaries of our work — can better appreciate them and assess their performance represents significant progress in improving the work of the General Assembly.

Unlike other organs of the United Nations, the General Assembly does not report to a higher body, being the chief policy-making body itself. In addition, its decisions are not binding. However, we should not forget that our actions are scrutinized by our peoples, who have the final say as to whether or not the General Assembly is relevant to their concerns and effective in the advancement of their interests.

Resolution 58/126 also calls for consultations among the three main United Nations organs — the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council — in order to enhance coordination on common concerns. There has been compliance in that regard, but it has left much to be desired, since no substantive coordination is reported to have arisen from such consultations. This is an area that deserves further review so that we can reap the benefits from such consultations. Likewise, there should be prompt reporting of their outcomes for consideration by the general membership.

In conclusion, my delegation recognizes the difficulties of introducing significant reforms in the work of the General Assembly, which have become ingrained in the nearly 60 years of its existence. My delegation believes that, notwithstanding the slow pace of the implementation of the recommendations of resolution 58/126, important positive steps have already been agreed upon. In that regard, my delegation wishes to stress the importance of maintaining our collective resolve to swiftly and effectively carry out what we have resolved to accomplish: the revitalization of the General Assembly.

Mr. Le Luong Minh (Viet Nam): At the outset, I would like to express my delegation's sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General for the report (A/59/354) before us today for consideration. We highly value the strong commitment and the efforts of His Excellency Mr. Julian Hunte, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, in further revitalizing the work of the General Assembly during that session.

My delegation wishes to align itself with the statement made earlier by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement Working Group on Reform of the United Nations and Revitalization of the General Assembly.

My delegation fully recognizes the vital importance of the process of reform initiated by the Secretary-General, which has been under way for nearly a decade now. The success of that process of reform is crucial if the United Nations is to play its role more effectively in the light of the many new and major challenges and threats — including war and armed conflict, hunger, poverty, terrorism and the spread of deadly diseases — facing the nations of the world today.

We have noted with satisfaction that, according to the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/59/1), approximately 85 per cent of the reform packages proposed in 1997 and 2002 have been either fully or partly implemented. I wish to assure the Secretary-General, the Secretariat and all other delegations of our full cooperation in carrying on that important endeavour.

My delegation believes that the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly remains among the most essential elements of the process of United Nations reform and therefore should be accorded continued priority. Efforts must be taken to enable the General Assembly to play its role as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations, as stated in the Millennium Declaration by heads of State or Government in 2000.

We particularly welcome the adoption of two new resolutions — resolutions 58/126 and 58/316 — that put forth specific measures and proposals in that regard. Such measures as the periodical submission by the Security Council of special subject-oriented reports to the General Assembly for its consideration, on issues of current international concern; regular briefings by the President of the Security Council to the President of the General Assembly on the work of the Council; and periodic meetings among the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council to discuss ways to improve cooperation and coordination are highly worthwhile.

In his four special reports (A/59/CRP.3, 4, 5 and 6), the Secretary-General provides useful information

and detailed analysis on the working methods of the Main Committees, the conceptualization of the agenda of the General Assembly, the priorities of the Organization and the reordering of the work of the Assembly. We support the option to reschedule the work of the Main Committees over two substantive periods during the session rather than the current three-month period, because that would help to reduce the burden on the small- and medium-sized missions and allow them to participate more effectively in meetings and consultations. However, given the different nature and scope of each Committee, my delegation is of the view that it would be best for each Committee to examine and decide its own working methods.

While positive progress has been made in certain areas, my delegation is cognizant of the problem of the delay in implementation and the non-implementation of resolutions related to the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. We pledge to join coordinated actions to address this situation.

Right from the start, when the process of reform of the United Nations was put in place, not only the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, but also the reform of the Security Council has always been high on the agenda, perhaps the subject of the most serious debates and proposals. In 2000, at the Millennium Summit, our leaders called for comprehensive reform. This is a very important issue indeed. The events of the past few years have made it even more so.

What my delegation wishes to emphasize here is that, while pushing ahead on efforts to reform the Security Council, we must not forget that strengthening the United Nations system calls for reform and revitalization of the work of all of its main bodies. We must not lose sight of the need to strengthen the Economic and Social Council, whose work is of paramount importance to all countries, especially developing countries, and whose work and methods of deliberation have revealed serious flaws. In that connection, we fully support the initiatives aimed at strengthening the Economic and Social Council's role as the mechanism for system-wide coordination in social and economic matters, especially with other international institutions such as the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, in order to make the Council more effective in addressing the development agenda of the United Nations.

In his report in document A/59/354, the Secretary-General makes a number of concrete suggestions for increasing the participation of non-governmental organizations in intergovernmental bodies, including suggestions for their involvement in the work of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. My delegation recognizes the significant contributions by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to the cause of economic and social development in many developing countries, ours among them. We recognize, as well, their contributions to the work of our Organization. My delegation holds the view that these concrete suggestions should be studied and considered carefully by Member States so as to ensure not only the increased participation of NGOs, but also the avoidance of abuse by those engaging in illegitimate, politically-motivated activities against sovereign Member States, as we have often witnessed. We support the proposal to draw up a code of conduct for NGOs that participate in United Nations activities, with a view to ensuring their responsibility and accountability.

The revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and the strengthening of the United Nations system are aimed at making the United Nations stronger and more effective in facing and responding to both traditional and new global threats and challenges. Resolution 58/269, entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change", and resolution 58/317, entitled "Reaffirming the central role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security and the promotion of international cooperation", were adopted by the General Assembly with an overwhelming majority last August and gave new impetus to our endeavours. We hope that our debate today will help unite our minds and bring us closer to our common goal.

Mr. Maurer (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): There is no need to dwell here on the importance that Switzerland attaches to a strong and effective United Nations that is capable of taking up the challenges presented by the modern world, especially in the fields of security, respect for human rights and sustainable development in all its aspects. The continuing reform process of the United Nations is one of the keys that will allow us to achieve this objective and to forge a more effective multilateralism.

The Secretary-General wishes to revitalize this process of reform by establishing two review panels of high-level experts. Switzerland welcomes this innovative approach and is looking forward to studying the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change in December. We are pleased today to be able to respond to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations.

Switzerland has noted with great interest the contents of the Cardoso report on civil society relations and supports the thrust of the Secretary-General's proposals. My country is open to the participation of civil society and we believe that the United Nations would strengthen its legitimacy by involving civil society more in its work.

Encouraging partnerships is undoubtedly one way of strengthening the United Nations: partnerships between the United Nations and regional organizations, as well as parliaments, non-governmental organizations and private companies.

Within the framework of specific measures to strengthen the interaction between civil society and the United Nations, Switzerland supports the proposal by the Secretary-General to organize interactive meetings with non-governmental organizations and parliamentarians before important events are held. We therefore support the idea of testing the feasibility of such meetings by holding one before the high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS, which is to be held on 2 June 2005.

Relations with civil society should not be constrained by a bureaucratic and centralized approach. The ability of the specialized agencies, funds and programmes to manoeuvre and take initiatives should be preserved, while maintaining positive existing practices. In this context, Switzerland would like to emphasize the interest that exists in initiatives developed in this field in Geneva, in some cases over a period of several decades. My country is therefore willing to study the formal and informal modes of interaction that take place in Geneva between civil society, NGOs and the United Nations, and to select the best practices and lessons learned in this area and share them with interested actors.

As for the establishment of the Partnerships Office, we take note of the progress made in setting it

up, and we would appreciate it if the concept of such an office could be developed further by the Secretariat.

Moreover, Switzerland reiterates its belief that the Global Compact must remain completely autonomous. The specific nature of its activity vis-à-vis companies, which it tries to convince of the fundamental values of the United Nations in the fields of human rights, social rights, protection of the environment and the fight against corruption, requires that it should retain maximum independence.

For Switzerland, the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly is a cornerstone of the United Nations reform process. The Assembly needs to recover its central role and should operate more effectively and more efficiently. A very important step in this direction was taken in July, with the adoption of resolution 58/316 on the improvement of the Assembly's working methods. We are pleased that the majority of the measures proposed are now being implemented.

Mr. President, at this point I would like to pay tribute to the work of your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, without whose perseverance we would probably not have achieved such results. We have every confidence that you will continue his efforts in the

same direction and with the same success, in particular on the central issue that still remains open for the fifty-ninth session — that of the General Assembly schedule.

I would like to make some observations on this last point. Switzerland is not convinced of the added value of distributing the work of the Main Committees throughout the session. Such dispersal of work could encourage the postponement of decisions and lead to a prolongation of sessions or even to a need for more plenary meetings, which would involve additional costs. Moreover, the question of synchronization with the budgetary cycle has not yet been resolved.

Switzerland wishes to stress that it advocates the successive holding of meetings of the six Main Committees from the beginning of September to the end of December. Such a solution would afford all Committees the same weight and importance and encourage synergies among them.

In the course of this fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, Switzerland intends to continue to support and to make its contribution to the revitalization process of the Assembly and to the strengthening of the United Nations in general.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.