Mr. President,

This debate on strengthening the United Nations system and revitalizing the UN General Assembly is important, essential and timely. Every institution needs to continue to renew itself – to stay relevant, efficient and effective. Today, even the UN’s strongest detractors recognize that it is relevant – to address the old and new challenges which face the international community.

2. The Secretary-General outlined these challenges in his opening remarks at the inauguration of the Assembly’s general debate last month. His call for institutional review and reform is timely. We welcome his initiative to convene a Group of Eminent Persons to deliberate and devise recommendations to him for consideration by Member States. We trust that the composition and work of these Eminent Persons will reflect the broad spectrum of views and approaches to UN Reform which exist in this Assembly.

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

4. We thank Deputy Secretary-General Frechette for her statement and her dedicated efforts to preserve and promote the UN’s institutional vitality.

5. Pakistan greatly appreciates the vigour with which you, Mr. President, have devoted yourself to promoting the reform process. Your informal paper of 17 October provides an invaluable framework and guide for our work on the General Assembly’s revitalization.

Mr. President,

6. We must commence by acknowledging that, thanks to the purposeful efforts of Secretary-General Kofi Anan, considerable progress has been made since 1997 in improving the UN Secretariat and its support machinery – Human resource management reforms, results-based budgeting, and other administrative improvements are inculcating a new work culture. These are, of course, a work in progress. Pakistan has contributed to this process – especially to human management reforms – and will continue to do so.
7. We endorse the Secretary-General’s suggestion that attention now be focused on institutional reforms of the UN’s intergovernmental organs. This has proved to be a politically difficult exercise in the past. If it is to produce more substantive results, Member States need to agree on at least the broad strategic objectives for undertaking this exercise. The aim must be to enhance the realization of the purposes and principles of the UN Charter – promoting universal peace, security and prosperity on the basis of the sovereign equality of States. It should not be propelled by the transient or narrow pre-occupations of a few, albeit important, States if these run contrary to the central purposes of our Charter and the democratic ethos of our Organization.

8. It is the hope of the Pakistan delegation that, in the light of recent developments, the Eminent Experts convened by the Secretary-General will give consideration to ensuring that the prescription against the use or threat of use of force in international relations is strengthened and not eroded and that neither Article 42 nor Article 51 are misused to breach this central Charter principle. It is also essential to devise a more institutionalized method to promote equitable implementation of UN resolutions, including implementation of Security Council resolutions, in accordance with Article 25 of the UN Charter.

Mr. President,

9. The Assembly has already discussed the reform of the Security Council recently. I will not repeat our views on this. But, in the context of UN reforms, it is necessary to draw attention to the following considerations:

One, the Security Council is progressively extending the scope of its responsibilities far beyond the role – the central role – it was assigned in the Charter to deal with the threats to international peace and security. Many of the issues taken up by the Council – especially in its thematic debates – rightly belong within the orbit of the General Assembly, ECOSOC or other bodies. New efforts to entrust the Council with responsibilities for counter-proliferation – while ignoring the goals of disarmament – is a current case in point.

Two, the deliberations of the Council lack transparency and openness, contrary to rule 48 of the Provisional Rules of Procedure. Resolutions are prepared by one or two or four permanent members and brought to the Council for informal consultations which, often, prove to be pro forma. Consensus is constructed mostly in capitals, not in the Council. The views of the Council’s non-permanent members are heard, at times, but bear little or no influence on the Council’s decisions.
10. This ethos of the Council must be changed. It is for this Assembly to obtain this change, with insistence, here and in the concerned capitals. Expanding the Council may help to erode great power control of the Security Council; but not if new members also seek to join the Club of the privileged by seeking the status of permanent members. The deadlock on Security Council expansion is due to the clash between the general aspiration for democracy versus the particular demand for privilege.

Mr. President,

11. While criticism of the Security Council’s shortcomings are subdued, assessments of this Assembly are often harsh. Inefficient, ineffective and irrelevant are often adjectives placed before a description of the General Assembly. Such harsh assessments ignore history and international politics. The General Assembly has many outstanding achievements that history will recall. It played the heading role in enabling the peoples under colonial rule liberate themselves through the exercise of the right of self-determination. Most of our States would not be here as sovereign Members of the UN were it not for the bold and principled role of the General Assembly. The Assembly has contributed immensely to the evolution of international law and norms – for disarmament and non-proliferation, economic and social development, human rights, health, labour communications and environment. It has addressed the issues of peace and security, and opposed aggression and the use of force whenever – as happened often in the Cold War – the Security Council was paralyzed by partisan vetos. It has created institutions for international cooperation in vital fields, including socio-economic development. It has convened Conferences to mobilize the international community on global priority issues – population, the rights of women and children, the environment, human rights, trade, financing for development.

Mr. President,

12. It is not surprising that the Assembly’s agenda is long and often over-loaded. Each of the UN’s member States has a sovereign and democratic right to bring before this Assembly its difficulties and despair, its ideas and initiatives. Consideration of these issues by the General Assembly is an expression of solidarity which binds together the international community.

13. Our agenda would be shorter, if the problems and issues brought before the Assembly could be speedily resolved. They cannot because, often, they are complex and intractable. They cannot because, more often, action is not taken to implement the Assembly’s decisions – for political, financial or practical reasons. The concerned Member States have no choice but to keep reminding the world of the existence of these issues.
14. The much advertised irrelevance of the General Assembly has, in fact, been inflicted on it by some of those very powers who decry the importance of its deliberations and decisions. Transferring consideration of most of the burning issues of our times – e.g. terrorism and non-proliferation – to the Security Council, sucks the political oxygen out of the General Assembly. Enhancing the role of the Assembly is a political not a procedural exercise. The Assembly must be enabled, not disabled, from considering the priority issues and serve the primary locus of the discussions and actions of the General Assembly. And all Member States should commit themselves to observe and implement the Assembly’s resolutions.

15. Sadly, the thrust of some proposals for the Assembly’s reform run counter rather than towards the principles of democracy. Despite professions of respect for the principle of sovereign equality, some States support proposals to create more restricted bodies – an executive committee, steering committee, or other select and privileged groups – within the General Assembly, ostensibly to enhance efficiency and effectiveness. Such bodies – like the Security Council – may be able to adopt decisions more quickly and perhaps more clearly; but these will lack universality and legitimacy; they will deprive the majority of a voice on the most important issues; they will increase inequality within the UN; they will transform the Assembly into a rubber-stamp.

16. This is not to say that procedural improvements should not be made in the General Assembly. In our debates over the past few years, a number of useful suggestions have been advanced which merit positive consideration.

- **Firstly**, Rationalization of the Assembly’s agenda is a desirable objective. Similar items can be amalgamated. Related items can be grouped. Some items – which are no longer of interest to any Member State can be eliminated. Several items presently taken up by plenary could be assigned to a Main Committee. At the same time, the Agenda must remain open to the insertion of new issues which may arise. However, it must be borne in mind that rationalization of the Agenda is essentially a political exercise. We should first decide who will review and recommend the agenda’s rationalization – the General Committee and or friends of the President or a specially created group. Discussions will have to be taken in consultation with states interested in the concerned items. And, any criteria utilized to guide these decisions will have to equitably applied to all.

- **Secondly**, the Assembly can do much to improve the content of the resolutions. We should attempt to restrict to shorter resolutions perhaps limited to three or four operative paragraphs at least for items which have been previously considered by the Assembly or on which there are substantive recommendations from other bodies or organizations,
which need not be repeated, but either endorsed, amended or commented upon. When the reports from the Secretariat offer recommendations, these could be subsequently endorsed or amended in a short resolution. New issues or proposals may have to be addressed more substantively. It could also be a requirement for resolutions on “old” references to be submitted and circulated a few days before consideration of the item, so that discussion could be focused on it, rather than a repetition of general problems. On ‘new’ issues, debates may be necessary before the drafting of decisions.

Thirdly, the Main Committees of the Assembly have developed their own entrenched cultures. There is a need to harmonize their work. As a general rule, general debates could be restricted in the Committees; and discussions focused on specific resolutions or proposals. There is also need to introduce uniformity in the decision making process in various Committees. Some of them e.g. Second and Sixth or Fifth committees work on the basis of consensus. The First Committee resorts to voting as necessary; the Third Committee more often than not. A uniform process should be evolved for intensive consultations to build consensus, with the option of voting where consensus becomes impossible to achieve. Fourth, the timings of the Committee meetings requires fresh thinking concerning simultaneous meetings of the plenary and six Main Committees is beyond the capacity of most of the smaller delegations. It also stretches the conference services. Permanent Representatives are unable to devote adequate attention to all issues. As suggested by many from this forum, sequential convening of the Committee meetings spread from January to September should be seriously considered. The results of the Committees could be collectively approved in the Plenary when it opens in September for the general debate.

Mr. President,

17. The management of the Plenary and the Main Committees through the year should be entrusted to the President of the General Assembly. To enable them to discharge their responsibilities, it seems essential to strengthen the President’s Executive Office.

18. Another extremely important aspect is cooperation between the Assembly and other main organs of the UN, particularly the Security Council and the ECOSOC. Greater coherence in the work of the three organs will bring synergy to our work. In this context, my delegation had proposed the idea of Composite Committees with membership drawn from the three main organs in order to address complex emergencies. I am pleased to note that the summary of the 17th October informals mentions this idea. At the informal discussion scheduled later this month, we hope we can develop it further.
Mr. President,

19. Considerable attention has also been devoted to reform and revival of the Economic & Social Council. It cannot be revived by merely changing its name. If an Economic and Social Security Council is created, will it be empowered to consider and decide on central issues relating to the management of international economic and social relations? Will its decisions be binding on Member States and thus implemented by Member States? If not, transforming ECOSOC perhaps into a more restricted forum of few selected “economic powers” will merely intensify inequality rather than carve the central role in economic and social affairs envisaged for it in the UN Charter. It may be, therefore, more productive to focus on ways and means to operationalize the responsibility entrusted to ECOSOC for the integrated follow-up of the major international Conferences. The annual high-level meetings, with the participation of the Bretton Woods Institutions and the WTO, provide a good opportunity to introduce coherence and complementarity in the global governance of economic and social relations.

Mr. President,

20. Apart from political will, the decisions of Member States cannot be realized without adequate resources. It is ironic that while military budgets are rising and enormous amounts expended for wars and the reconstruction of countries devastated by such wars, parsimony is practiced only when it comes to financing the operations and actions of the United Nations. The political and moral justification for constraining the United Nations to virtual zero growth must be questioned – by Member States and by all those, including civil societies, which are committed to the ideal of multilateral but democratic management of international relations. The concomitant of UN Reform must be a political commitment by all States to fund its approved activities.

Mr. President,

21. Pakistan believes that reform of the UN’s Budget and the budget formulation process will strengthen the Organization. We would, therefore, like to participate in the Budget reform discussions with an open mind. For us, the most important issue is the end result. We would support a formula that better enables the Organization to achieve the mandates and ensures alignment of resources with the priority activities of the Organization. However, we also believe that any institutional change must be preceded by indepth deliberations. Some of the systemic implications of a change in the current budgetary process need to be examined closely:

- Firstly, if we were to change the format of MTP and the role of CPC, through what mechanism will the member states ensure that all mandates have been translated into implementable programmes and provided adequate funding;
Secondly, how do we handle the priority setting, a function that currently falls in the purview of the CPC. If we leave it to the Fifth Committee, are we letting the priority-setting be done on the basis of resources. This also raises the larger question of whether resources should determine priorities or should resources be aligned with priorities;

Thirdly, what would be role of MTP, and who would frame and review it? And if it is to be abolished and replaced by a Strategic Framework, as is being proposed by the JIU, which intergovernmental body would frame and review the Framework;

There are several other aspects such as the implications of combining budget outline with the MTP etc, which the Fifth Committee would need to discuss thoroughly before reaching a decision.

Mr. President,

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

Thank you, Mr. President.