Statement by Mr. Saleem Saifullah Khan, Member Pakistan Delegation to the 59th Session of the General Assembly on Agenda Item 12: Report of the Economic and Social Council, New York, 26 October 2004

Mr. President,

It is a great honour and a privilege for me to welcome the Report of the Economic and Social Council for the year 2004 on behalf of the Pakistan delegation. The Members of the Bureau under the able stewardship of President of the Council Her Excellency Marjatta Rasi, have done a commendable job in bringing out this comprehensive report. We complement them all for a job well done.

Mr. President,

We committed ourselves to the achievement of international cooperation for resolving international economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems under the UN Charter six decades ago. Besides, we also pledged to promote higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development. ECOSOC as one of the major organs of the United Nations system has a central role to play towards the realization of these objectives and commitments.

The most important role for the Council is to create conditions that would lead to a genuine global partnership for economic growth and sustainable development, a role that the Council seeks to perform through a system-wide coordination of UN activities in the economic and social fields.

The Report under our consideration today, thus, presents a good opportunity to review the activities undertaken by the Council to achieve these objectives.

This year the Special High Level Meeting of the Council with the Bretton Woods Institutions and the World Trade Organization took place on April 26, 2004. The special meeting has become a major platform for substantive deliberations on the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus. We feel that this process needs to be strengthened further to make the existing cooperation between UN and other international economic organizations effective and meaningful.

The other important element of the Council’s activities is the High Level Segment that focuses on a specific theme every year. The theme for this year addressed resource mobilization for the Least Developed Countries in the context of the Plan of Action for the LDCs. The draft Ministerial Declaration adopted by the Council on the theme recognized the weak implementation of the Plan of Action for the LDCs. This trend, the declaration feared, would leave the targets set by the Plan of Action unrealized. The declaration underscored the need to redouble global efforts to create an enabling environment at all levels to eradicate poverty and promote sustainable development of the LDCs.

It is regrettable that despite intensive consultations during the Substantive Session of ECOSOC this year, except for the theme for 2005, the member states were unable to reach an agreement on the themes for the multi-year work programme. The theme for 2005, which will focus on a review of the progress made in achieving internationally agreed development goals, including MDGs, will afford ECOSOC an important opportunity to provide inputs to the 2005 high-level event.

Mr. President,
We are quite encouraged to see the Council assume an active role in a number of key areas by spearheading several important initiatives in the past several years. The “Manifesto on Poverty” drawn in 1999 High Level Segment provided the critical conceptual basis for the MDGs. Similarly, the establishment of the Information Communication Technologies Task Force, the international endorsement of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development, and the holding of the International Conference on Financing for Development would not have been possible without the critical and substantive inputs of ECOSOC. The Council has also been entrusted with the task of integrated and coordinated follow up of major UN Conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields. This is in addition to its responsibility to monitor and assess the follow up to the International Conference on Financing for Development.

In order to enable ECOSOC to perform these important tasks, we will have to bolster its strengths and eliminate its shortcomings.

The ambit of Council activities is undergoing a positive expansion, which indeed is a very welcome development. We strongly believe that ECOSOC can and must act as the central platform for global dialogue to promote coherence, consistency and coordination of trade, development and financial policies.

The inequities and exclusive nature of the process of globalization only makes such an integrated approach an urgent contemporary imperative. And the positioning of ECOSOC in the international organizational architecture eminently qualifies it to perform this unique role of overseeing and coordinating economic and social decisions at the national, regional and international levels.

Development issues have economic and social dimensions, the two are becoming increasingly inter-twined. An integrated approach to economic and social development would help avoid duplication and overlap, besides ensuring strengthened coordination and optimal utilization of resources at all levels. The principal objective should be to promote growth, equity, coherence and humanism in national and international policies.

Mr. President,

A major shortcoming commonly attributed to ECOSOC is its inability to enforce its decisions and its relative powerless in comparison to the international financial, trade and economic institutions. Pakistan believes that ECOSOC should optimize its resources and opportunities, including an improvement in its programme of work, and serve as an instrument to strengthen multilateralism by providing a quality platform for high level engagement of member states, international institutions, civil society, and private sector for discussions on emerging global trends, harmonization of global policies, and identification of common but differential responsibilities for global action.

The ECOSOC should play a role in managing globalization and the promotion of equitable socio-economic development. The goals set out in the Millennium Declaration must continue to guide efforts in that direction. Security in its most comprehensive sense can only be assured when there is simultaneous progress in addressing security threats as well as social and economic challenges. To this end, the ECOSOC should also play a key role in the preparations for the 2005 major event, which will focus on the follow up of the Millennium Summit and the integrated follow up of the UN conferences. The High level and Coordination segments of the 2005 substantive session of ECOSOC should evolve concrete recommendations based on a review of the commitments made in the Millennium Declaration in particular Millennium Development Goals, MDGRs prepared by a large number of countries, reports of regional commissions, and the work of the functional commissions to achieve MDGs.
We clearly see the close and interdependent nature of peace and development and also fully realize that one without the other is unsustainable. We, therefore, believe that the process of UN reform would not be complete without according equal emphasis to enhancing the UN role in promoting global development agenda and by empowering its various Organs, including ECOSOC. This should be in addition to restoring the primacy of General Assembly as the supreme organ of the UN.

Finally, there is a growing recognition that the principal organs of the UN need to closely cooperate and coordinate their work in order to eschew duplication and effectively address the multidimensional crises facing the world today. In this regard the proposal for establishing ad hoc composite committees with representation from the ECOSOC the General Assembly and other stakeholders needs to be seriously considered.

I thank you Mr. President.