Madam President,

We thank the Secretary-General for his report on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (Doc A/61/483)

2. Pakistan shares the growing concern of the UN’s general membership that over the past two decades the role and effectiveness of the UN General Assembly – as envisaged in the Charter – has been progressively and significantly eroded.

3. The General Assembly has adopted resolutions in recent sessions 57/300, 58/126, 59/313 and 60/286 – which sought to inject vitality in its work and outcomes. The 2005 Summit also reaffirmed the central position of the General Assembly. Efforts were continued during the 60th Session to promote the Summit’s decision. Pakistan urges the full implementation of the previous UNGA resolutions on revitalization.

Madam President,

4. Pakistan has consistently held that the issue of revitalization of the General Assembly is a political not a procedural issue. Certainly, we should further rationalize the Assembly’s agenda, amalgamating similar items and eliminating redundant issues. We should seek to streamline resolutions, making them shorter and more action-oriented. We should
be better organized in the Plenary and the Assembly’s Main Committees, to save money and time, and to conduct more focused discussions and adopt more specific decisions. The reports sought from the Secretariat could also be improved; and in certain instances, consolidated and streamlined. Repetitive and overlapping mandates could be avoided. Indeed considerable improvements have been made already and further improvements can be realized, including through the review of mandates initiated during this year in the GA’s informal plenary.

5. Yet, the real revitalization of the Assembly will happen only once the general membership displays the political will and determination to enable the Assembly to discharge its prescribed role and responsibility as envisaged by the UN Charter and only once the erosion of this role and authority – principally by the Security Council and, to a certain extent, by the Secretariat – is halted and reversed.

6. Under the UN Charter, the General Assembly’s role is broad and far-teaching. It is the principal deliberative, policy making and most representative organ of the United Nations. It is the principal forum where the policies of states are to be harmonized and the purposes and principles of the UN Charter promoted and realized.

7. The General Assembly’s role covers political, security, economic and social, human rights and humanitarian issues, norm-setting and treaty-making, as well as the financial and administrative management of the Organization and its Secretariat.
8. The Assembly’s political role is manifested in the ability of any Member State to raise any issue of concern to it in the Assembly, under an existing or additional agenda item. This is the special value of the United Nations for the majority of its membership. This ability should not be arbitrarily restricted or proscribed in the name of rationalization.

9. It is particularly vital to ensure the exercise of the Assembly’s role in the maintenance of international peace and security in accordance with Articles 10, 11, 12, 14 and 35 of the Charter. The encroachment on the role of the Assembly by the Security Council should be reversed. The Council’s role in the maintenance of peace and security, as envisaged in the Charter, is mainly reactive, not pro-active. We believe that the thematic issues raised in the Security Council should revert to the General Assembly.

10. The Security Council has assumed a role in two areas – terrorism and non-proliferation. This was in response to extra-ordinary events. Now that the General Assembly has adopted a comprehensive strategy on terrorism, the main responsibility in this area should revert to the Assembly. The Security Council’s Committees should be replaced by a Standing Committee on Counter-Terrorism under the General Assembly. Similarly, the Assembly should re-assert its role in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, replacing the 1540 Committee with a comparative Assembly Committee. Likewise, the Assembly and ECOSOC, rather than the Security Council, should be the focus of
consideration of humanitarian issues, including those arising from conflict situations.

11. The Assembly should also exercise closer examination of the deliberations and decisions of the Security Council. We support the submission of special reports by the Security Council. Such a review is especially necessary whenever the Security Council authorizes action under Charter VII or wherever a veto is exercised in the Security Council. The Assembly also has a vital role in the economic and social field, both in policy formulation and implementation. The ECOSOC – which is to hold Annual Ministerial Reviews and to act as a Development Cooperation Forum – should report to the Assembly. The Assembly should organize a special meeting on Development during its Annual General debate to allow for a Ministerial and leadership review of economic and social policy issues.

12. We attach special importance to the norm setting and treaty making role of the General Assembly. To this end, we would advocate the creation of ad hoc Committees to elaborate instruments on various issues identified for new norm setting by the Assembly or as a result of recommendations of various Committees and Commissions e.g. the Law Commission.

13. The General Assembly’s role in the financial and administrative management of the Organization needs to be strengthened. We will resist all efforts to weaken or marginalize this role exercised presently mainly through the Fifth Committee. In particular, the Assembly should
closely scrutinize the decisions of the Security Council which require the allocation of resources for peacekeeping or other purposes.

14. This Assembly’s administrative role should be strengthened inter alia by requiring the Secretary-General to consult the Assembly on all high-level appointments, including the appointment of SRSGs. The Assembly’s approval should also be secured for the establishment of High-Level Panels on various issues and the selection of their members.

15. A major reason for the erosion of the Assembly’s credibility and effectiveness is the non-implementation of its resolutions and decisions. Implementation can be enhanced by improving the content of the Assembly’s resolutions. But, there is a pressing need for some form of mechanisms which can monitor the implementation of these resolutions. We, therefore, suggest that for every resolution, the Secretariat he required to submit, within a specific timeframe, a report on the “status of implementation”. This should include information on the reasons for non-implementation or a delay in implementation. A special unit could be created within the Secretariat for the follow-up and review of the implementation of UNGA resolutions. Perhaps such a unit could be located within the office of the General Assembly President.

16. Finally, we support all efforts to strengthen the Office of the President of the Assembly. Additional professional and support staff should be provided for the office. The office should also be strengthened operationally. The Secretary-General should brief the Assembly President, perhaps every two weeks, on the activities underway in
various parts of the UN, including in the Security Council. The GA President should also be authorized to request special briefings on any situation or issue from the Presidents of the Security Council and ECOSOC and from the Secretary-General. In turn, the GA President should evolve a standing mechanism – perhaps through the General Committee – to keep the general membership fully abreast of developments in various parts of the UN and its family of organizations.

Madam President,

17. Pakistan hopes that during this session, we will revive the consultative mechanism to consider recommendations for the revival of the General Assembly. Pakistan will work, together with the other Member States, and especially the NAM and the Group of 77 & China, to restore the role envisaged by the Charter for this Assembly.

I thank you.