



NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

# Final Communiqué

## of the first Session of the North Atlantic Council - (Terms of Reference and Organisation)

---

17 Sep. 1949 | Last updated: 09 Jun. 2010 16:20

---

The Council agrees its terms of reference and organization. It creates a Defence Committee, a Military Committee and Military Standing Group as well as five Regional Planning Groups.

The Council established by Article 9 of the North Atlantic Treaty held its first session in Washington on September 17, 1949. Representatives of the Parties to the Treaty attending this first session were:

- For Belgium, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, M. Paul van Zeeland;
- for Canada, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Lester B. Pearson;
- for Denmark, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Gustav Rasmussen;
- for France, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, M. Robert Schuman;
- for Iceland, the Minister to the United States, Mr. Thor Thors;
- for Italy, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Count Sforza;
- for Luxembourg, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Josef Bech;
- for the Netherlands, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Dirk U. Stikker;
- for Norway, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Halvard M. Lange;
- for Portugal, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Jose Caeiro de Matta;
- for the United Kingdom, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ernest Bevin;
- for the United States, the Secretary of State, Mr. Dean Acheson.

The task of the Council is to assist the Parties in implementing the Treaty and particularly in attaining its basic objective. That objective is to assist, in accordance with the Charter, in achieving the primary purpose of the United Nations--the maintenance of international peace and security. The Treaty is designed to do so by making clear the determination of the Parties collectively to preserve their common heritage of freedom and to defend themselves against aggression while emphasizing at the same time their desire to live in peace with all governments and all peoples.

It is in this spirit that the Foreign Ministers of the Parties have met in Washington and have taken steps to implement the Treaty. The meetings of the Council showed that all Parties are

united in their resolve to integrate their efforts for the promotion of lasting peace, the preservation of their common heritage and the strengthening of their common defence.

The main purpose of the Council during this first session was to provide for its own future operation and, in accordance with Article 9, to establish a Defence Committee and such other subsidiary bodies as are deemed necessary to assist the Council in considering matters concerning the implementation of the North Atlantic Treaty.

## **Organization**

The Council is the principal body in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In accordance with the Treaty, the Council is charged with the responsibility of considering all matters concerning the implementation of the provisions of the Treaty. Such subsidiary bodies as are set up under Article 9 of the Treaty are subordinate to the Council.

The organization established under the North Atlantic Treaty should be operated with as much flexibility as possible and be subject to review from time to time. The establishment of this machinery does not preclude the use of other means for consultation and co-operation between any or all of the Parties on matters relating to the Treaty.

## **Council**

As regards its own organization, the Council agreed as follows:

As decided on April 2, the Council will normally be composed of Foreign Ministers. Should the latter be unable to attend, their places shall be taken by plenipotentiary representatives designated by the Parties. To enable the Council to meet promptly at any time the diplomatic representatives in Washington of the Parties shall be empowered to act as their Governments' representatives whenever necessary.

## ***Terms of Reference***

The North Atlantic Treaty shall constitute the terms of reference of the Council.

## ***Time and Frequency of Sessions***

The Council shall be convened by the Chairman and shall meet in ordinary session annually and at such other times as may be deemed desirable by the majority of the Parties. Extraordinary sessions under Articles 4 and 5 of the Treaty may be called at the request of any Party invoking one of these Articles.

## ***Location of the Council Sessions***

The location of each session of the Council shall be determined by the Chairman after consultation with the other members of the Council. For general convenience the ordinary annual session should be held at about the same time and in the same general geographical area as the annual session of the General Assembly. Other ordinary sessions should whenever practicable be held at some convenient location in Europe.

## ***Chairmanship***

Chairmanship shall be held in turn by the Parties according to the alphabetical order in the English language beginning with the United States. Each Party shall hold office from the beginning of the one ordinary annual session until the appointment of the new Chairman at the following ordinary annual session. If any Party does not wish to accept the Chairmanship, it shall pass to the next Party in alphabetical order.

### ***Languages***

English and French shall be the official languages for the entire North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

### ***Permanent Co-ordination***

Additional political bodies shall not be established unless and until experience has demonstrated their need. However, the existing informal arrangement for consultation between representatives in Washington of the Parties shall be maintained.

### **Defence Committee**

The Council established a Defence Committee.

The Council reaffirmed that ensuring the security of the North Atlantic area is a primary objective of the North Atlantic Treaty and is vital to the security of each of the Parties. It is therefore of paramount importance that the Parties, separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help, and mutual aid, maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack. The Defence Committee should therefore immediately take the requisite steps to have drawn up unified defence plans for the North Atlantic area.

As regards the organization of the Defence Committee, the Council agreed as follows:

The Defence Committee will be composed of one representative from each Party. These representatives will normally be Defence Ministers. In any case where this is not possible, another representative may be designated.

### ***Terms of Reference***

The Defence Committee shall recommend measures for the implementation of Articles 3 and 5 in accordance with general policy guidance given by the Council.

### ***Time and Frequency of Sessions***

The Defence Committee shall be convened by the Chairman and shall meet in ordinary session annually and at such other times as it may be requested to meet by the Council or as may be deemed desirable by the majority of the members of the Defence Committee.

### ***Location***

The location of each session of the Defence Committee shall be determined by the Chairman in consultation with the members of the Committee.

### ***Chairmanship***

Chairmanship shall be held in turn by the Parties according to the alphabetical order in the English language beginning with the United States. Each Party shall hold the once from the beginning of one ordinary annual session until the appointment of the new Chairman at the following ordinary annual session. If any Party does not wish to accept the Chairmanship, it shall pass to the next Party in alphabetical order.

The Council suggested to the Defence Committee the general outline of those subsidiary military bodies which it considered appropriate for the task of aiding the Defence Committee in recommending measures for the implementation of Articles 3 and 5 of the Treaty. The Defence Committee was invited, among other things, to consider the question of these subsidiary bodies in detail and to elaborate on the general provisions suggested by the Council for each body.

The Council suggested in general terms that the military organization should include the following:

### **Military Committee**

The Defence Committee should establish a Military Committee composed of one military representative from each Party. These representatives should be Chiefs-of-Staff or their representatives. (Iceland, having no military establishment, may, if it so desires, be represented by a civilian official.)

### ***Terms of Reference***

The Military Committee should:

- provide general policy guidance of a military nature to its Standing Group;
- advise the Defence Committee and other agencies on military matters as appropriate;
- recommend to the Defence Committee military measures for the unified defence of the North Atlantic area.

### ***Location***

The Military Committee should normally meet in Washington.

### **Standing group**

In order to facilitate the rapid and efficient conduct of the work of the Military Committee, there should be set up a sub-committee of that body to be known as the "Standing Group". The Standing Group should be composed of one representative each of France, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

### ***Terms of Reference***

The Standing Group, in accordance with general policy guidance provided by the Military Committee, should provide such specific policy guidance and information of a military nature to the Regional Planning Groups and any other bodies of the organization as is necessary for their work.

To achieve the unified defence of the North Atlantic area, the Standing Group should co-ordinate and integrate the defence plans originating in the Regional Planning Groups, and

should make appropriate recommendations thereon to the Military Committee.

The Standing Group should recommend to the Military Committee those matters on which the Standing Group should be authorized to take action in the name of the Military Committee within the framework of approved policy.

It is recognized that it is the responsibility of individual governments to provide for the implementation of plans to which they have agreed. It is further recognized that it is the primary responsibility of the Regional Planning Groups to prepare plans for the defence of their respective regions. Subject to these principles, it is understood that before the Standing Group makes recommendations on any plan or course of action involving use of forces, facilities, or resources of a Party not represented on the Standing Group, going beyond or differing from arrangements previously agreed by the Party concerned, the Party should have the right to participate in the Standing Group in the work of formulating such recommendations. It is also understood that when communicating their regional plans to the Standing Group, the Regional Planning Groups should be entitled to have their plans presented and explained by any of their members and not necessarily by a member of the Standing Group.

### ***Time and Frequency of Sessions***

The Standing Group should be so organized as to function continuously.

### ***Location***

The permanent site of the Standing Group should be in Washington.

### ***Permanent Representation***

In order to maintain close contact with the Standing Group, a Party not represented thereon may appoint a special representative to provide permanent liaison with the Standing Group.

### **Regional Planning Groups**

In order to ensure speedy and efficient planning of the unified defence of the whole North Atlantic area there should be established Regional Planning Groups on a geographical basis. It should be provided that:

Before any Regional Planning Group makes any recommendations affecting the defence of the territory or involving the use of forces, facilities, or resources of any Party not a member of that Group, that Party should have the right to participate in the Group in the work of formulating such recommendations. Any Group which considers that a Party not a member of the Group can contribute to the defence planning of that Group's region, can call upon that Party to join in the planning as appropriate.

#### ***Northern European Regional Planning Group***

Denmark, Norway, and the United Kingdom.

The United States has been requested and has agreed to participate actively in the defence planning as appropriate.

Other Parties may participate under the provisions listed above.

### ***Western European Planning Group***

Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom.

Canada and the United States have been requested and have agreed to participate actively in the defence planning as appropriate. Other Parties may, and particularly Denmark and Italy will, participate under the provisions listed above.

### ***Southern European- Western Mediterranean Regional Planning Group***

France, Italy and the United Kingdom.

The United States has been requested and has agreed to participate actively in the defence planning as appropriate.

Other Parties may participate under the provisions listed above.

It is recognized that there are problems which are clearly common to the defence of the areas covered by the three European regional groups. It is therefore important that arrangements be made by the Defence Committee with a view to ensuring full co-operation between two, or if the need arises, all three groups.

### ***Canadian-United States Regional Planning Group***

Canada and the United States.

Other Parties may participate under the provisions listed above.

### ***North Atlantic Ocean Regional Planning Group***

Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The responsibilities for planning the defences in the North Atlantic Ocean cannot be shared equally by all members of the Group. On the other hand, these responsibilities can to some extent be divided along functional lines and allocated to those Parties who are best able to perform the respective defence functions. Therefore, the North Atlantic Ocean Regional Planning Group, when it meets, should establish a series of planning sub-groups related to specific functions of defence. The Group should determine on which sub-group or sub-groups each Party should sit, and the arrangements necessary to ensure co-ordination between these sub-groups in the interest of speedy and effective planning.

### ***Terms of Reference***

Each Regional Planning Group should:

- develop and recommend to the Military Committee through the Standing Group plans for the defence of the region;
- co-operate with the other Regional Planning Groups with a view to eliminating conflict in, and ensuring harmony among, the various regional plans.

### ***Location***

The Defence Committee should consider the question of the location of the Regional Planning Groups.

The Council recognizes that the question of military production and supply is an integral part of the whole problem of the defence of the North Atlantic area. Consequently, there shall be established as soon as possible appropriate machinery to consider these matters. The details of organization of this machinery, terms of reference, etc. shall be studied forthwith by a working group which shall submit recommendations to the Defence Committee or to the Council.

The Council recognizes the importance of economic and financial factors in the development and implementation of military plans for the defence of the North Atlantic area. Consequently, there shall be established as soon as possible appropriate machinery to consider these matters. The details of organization of this machinery, terms of reference, etc. shall be studied forthwith by a working group which shall submit recommendations to the Council.