

Extract from minutes of the 99th meeting of the WEU Council (8 November 1957)

Caption: On 8 November 1957, the Council of Western European Union (WEU) meets to discuss Recommendation No 18, in which the Assembly asked the Council to provide it with information on the decisions taken in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). The Council recognises in principle the need to inform the Assembly on European defence matters. But in practice, the Council does not have sufficient information in the field of defence; it is dependent on the willingness of NATO to help. Jean Chauvel from France states that he must reserve the position of his government for the time being and that the transfer of powers from WEU to NATO would require something in return from NATO. Sir Anthony Rumbold from the United Kingdom suggests that the problem should be put to NATO as soon as possible to determine the best solution. The Council therefore decides to convene a working party to draft a communication to NATO on this question. With regard to the Assembly's proposal, which could result in a second WEU Council, Sir Anthony Rumbold states that his Minister seems favourable to the idea and that, according to the United Kingdom NATO representative, this request for information should not raise any difficulties for the non-WEU members of NATO. Personally, Jean Chauvel considers that the procedure is not satisfactory and that it could be viewed negatively by those states since such an agreement would give seven Atlantic countries the exclusive privilege of receiving information. He therefore wonders whether the Council could act as an intermediary between NATO and the Assembly, referring any questions coming within the remit of NATO and their replies to the Assembly.

Source: Council of the Western European Union. Extract from minutes of the 99th meeting of WEU Council held on 8 November 1957. CR (57) 28. pp. 5-11;[s.p.]. Archives nationales de Luxembourg (ANLux). <http://www.anlux.lu>. Western European Union Archives. Secretariat-General/Council's Archives. 1954-1987. Relations with non member countries and other International Organisations. Year: 1957, 01/11/1954-31/12/1957. File 330.00. Volume 1/3.

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EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF 99th MEETING
OF W.E.U. COUNCIL HELD ON 8 NOV. 57

CR (57) 28

DECLASSIFIED
W.E.U. 1st MARCH 1989

II. NEXT MEETING OF THE COUNCIL AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL
(ref. CR (57) 27, IV)

3. Joint Meeting Council of Ministers/Bureau of the
Assembly
(C (57) 197) *H. Goffin*

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the main question for discussion at this meeting would be Recommendation No. 18, the essential part of which read as follows:

"The Assembly,

RECOMMENDS TO THE COUNCIL

1. That in future it shall carry out fully the responsibilities which are imposed by the Treaty, and make full report thereon to the Assembly;
2. That meanwhile, in view of the urgency of giving the Assembly full information, it communicate its Opinion to the Assembly concerning the following proposal:

That the Governments of the member States of Western European Union entrust their Permanent Representatives to N.A.T.O., acting as representatives of their Ministers of Foreign Affairs, with the mission of keeping the Committee on Defence Questions and Armaments informed concerning developments in those sectors where the W.E.U. Council has at present transferred its functions to N.A.T.O."

Delegations agreed that though the decision on the important political problem raised by this Recommendation must be taken by the Ministers themselves, advance preparation in the Council was essential.

This should concern:

- a) the fundamental decision of principle as to whether the Council of W.E.U. were prepared to meet the wish of the Assembly to receive information on European defence matters;
- b) if so, the means by which this decision could be implemented: it was clear that, since the Council had decided to fulfil their mutual defence obligations through N.A.T.O., and since, consequently, the required information was not at their disposal, implementation would depend, in the first place, on the willingness of N.A.T.O. to help.

/If N.A.T.O. ...

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If N.A.T.O. were willing, various means of implementing the decision of principle could be proposed to the Ministers in general terms.

a) Decision of principle

M. CHAMPENOIS recalled that there had been a growing feeling in the Council that means must be found of giving some satisfaction to the Assembly.

M. CHAUVEL, speaking personally, agreed that this was so. The Council's view as to their own competence had not changed, but it did not seem that they could maintain their position concerning the supply of information without provoking a crisis in their relations with the Assembly. He must, however, reserve the position of his Government for the time being.

Mr. STIKKER recalled his remarks at the last meeting, when he had argued that the Council had never disputed the right of the Assembly to discuss defence questions, but that, since the seven Governments had decided to fulfil their obligations through N.A.T.O., the W.E.U. Council as such did not dispose of the necessary information. However, this did not exclude the possibility that the Council might arrange for the Assembly to receive information of a purely factual character in some way, without affecting the Council's position concerning their own competence.

The COUNCIL:

AGREED that a decision of principle was required as to whether the Council of W.E.U. were prepared to meet the wish of the Assembly to receive information on European defence matters.

b) Implementation of the decision of principle

(i) The Council examined the question of the willingness of N.A.T.O. to help.

Mr. STIKKER pointed out that, were N.A.T.O. to refuse, and the Council be unable to supply the information requested, a dangerous situation might arise, since the Assembly would be encouraged to insist on the first point of their Recommendation concerning the responsibilities of the Council. He felt that N.A.T.O. could be regarded as having a certain obligation, and even interest, in this matter.

Mr. von HERWARTH recalled that under Article IV of the Treaty, "the Council and its agency will rely on the appropriate military authorities of N.A.T.O. for information and advice on military matters": surely this was sufficient basis on which to ask for N.A.T.O.'s co-operation.

/M. CHAUVEL ...

M. CHAUVEL considered that the transfer of competence from W.E.U. to N.A.T.O. implied something in return and that this could be regarded as justification for requesting assistance from N.A.T.O.

Sir Anthony RUMBOLD suggested that the problem should be put to N.A.T.O., requesting their views as to what the best solution might be. It must be done quickly, however, if agreed views were to be ready in time for the Joint Meeting with the Bureau, and the urgency of the matter should be stressed with N.A.T.O.

The COUNCIL:

DECIDED to convene a working party on Tuesday, 12th November at 10.30 a.m. to draft a communication on the lines suggested to be sent to N.A.T.O. by the Chairman on behalf of the Council; this draft would be referred to Governments, and its despatch would be subject to the decision of principle referred to under a) above.

(ii) As regards possible means of implementing the decision of principle, the following suggestions were put forward as a basis for further discussion.

Mr. STIKKER, speaking personally, felt that the Assembly's proposed procedure might be dangerous; it might lead to a situation where there were in practice two W.E.U. Councils, and might well raise difficulties in N.A.T.O. from the non-W.E.U. members. He therefore wondered whether:

- a) a representative of N.A.T.O., preferably the Secretary-General, could reply at joint meetings to questions from the Assembly on matters of defence. These questions would have to be clearly defined in advance of meetings, and only those which were of a factual character and concerned matters of a non-controversial nature would be entertained;
- b) alternatively, the Council could be assisted at meetings with the Assembly by members of national delegations to N.A.T.O.

Sir Anthony RUMBOLD said that he had discussed the question with his Minister whose first reaction had been quite favourable to the Assembly's proposal.

As regards objections to this, he wondered whether the danger of creating two Councils was a very real one: these joint meetings would not be held frequently, and they would be convened on an ad hoc basis. The United Kingdom N.A.T.O. representative did not apparently think that great difficulties would be raised by the non-W.E.U. members of N.A.T.O. Any information given to the Assembly would have to be cleared with N.A.T.O., and in any case would not exceed that given in national parliaments.

/Speaking ...

Speaking personally, Sir Anthony said that the idea of the Secretary-General of N.A.T.O. attending joint meetings seemed quite feasible, but wondered whether, if an objection concerning the usurping of the Council's functions applied to the Assembly's proposal, it would not apply here also. As regards the assistance of representatives of national delegations to N.A.T.O., he wondered whether this might not be a rather clumsy procedure as compared with that proposed by the Assembly. The objection that non-W.E.U. members of N.A.T.O. might react unfavourably to the Assembly's proposal would surely apply to this arrangement also.

M. CHAUVEL, also speaking personally, agreed that the procedure proposed by the Assembly did not seem satisfactory. It must not be forgotten that the responsibility of the Council was "collegiate" and could not be delegated to another Council.

He further recalled that the procedure proposed by the Assembly was purely an interim one, to be adopted pending a decision by the Council on the main problem of their responsibilities. He did not think, therefore, that the Assembly's proposal contained any suggestion that another council should be permanently substituted for the present one. Finally, he shared the view that the reaction of the non-W.E.U. members of N.A.T.O. to the Assembly's proposal might not be favourable, since such an arrangement would give seven Atlantic countries the exclusive privilege of receiving information.

M. CHAUVEL wondered whether the Council could not act as an intermediary between the Assembly and N.A.T.O. Questions coming within the competence of N.A.T.O. would be referred to that organisation by the Council, who would transmit the replies received to the Assembly.

As regards the conduct of joint meetings at which the Council's replies were given, M. Chauvel wondered whether, for example, the high-ranking officer, whose assistance was provided for under Article IV of Protocol II, might not be able to help the Council with any supplementary questions. The French delegation intended to submit a paper to the Secretariat outlining a general procedure.

M. ZOPPI also feared unfavourable reactions to the Assembly's proposals from countries not members of W.E.U., not only within N.A.T.O., but also amongst parliamentarians.

Speaking personally, he thought a possible means of supplying the necessary information might be to refer the Assembly's questions to N.A.T.O., asking that a representative of that organisation should be authorised to prepare the replies with the Council; the Council themselves should then convey the answers to the Assembly, though, if necessary, a representative of the international secretariat of N.A.T.O. might reply to supplementary questions, the choice of this person to be left to N.A.T.O. on a case by case basis.

/It seemed ...

It seemed to M. Zoppi most important that the functions of the Council should be maintained. He stressed that the Assembly's proposal had been formulated for lack of anything better, since they really wanted the Council to accept certain responsibilities and be in a position to reply to the Assembly themselves. If the Council accepted a provisional solution, the Assembly would revert to their fundamental contention concerning the Council's responsibilities.

M. CHAMPENOIS said that his Government were not in favour of the Assembly's proposal, mainly for the reasons already advanced by other speakers, but particularly in view of the reactions of the other N.A.T.O. countries. His authorities did not seem to be as optimistic as the United Kingdom Representative on this point.

M. Champenois went on to say that the Assembly would certainly be extremely pleased if a representative of N.A.T.O. were to speak to them during their Sessions. This possibility might be worth considering, even though the same objection concerning the reaction of other N.A.T.O. countries would apply.

M. CHAUVEL felt it important to distinguish this question from that now under review, i.e., the search for a solution to the problem of giving information to the Assembly on the basis of which it could prepare its reports and debates; the problem of relations with the Assembly during sessions was a separate one.

Mr. von HERWARTH said that he had put some ideas on the question to his Government, but had as yet no reactions.

Mr. STIKKER commented on some of the suggestions made. He doubted whether the high-ranking officer of SHAPE would be the right person to help the Council at joint meetings, since the Assembly's questions would undoubtedly be mainly of a political nature. Any assistance would perhaps be better given by a representative who was fully aware of the political implications of such questions and had obtained prior clearance from N.A.T.O. on such points as were likely to arise. As regards the Assembly's proposal, Mr. Stikker also thought that the members of the Assembly would want the joint meetings to be held in Paris, which might give even more colour to the idea that there were two councils.

It emerged from the discussions that, provided N.A.T.O. were willing to help, the following means of implementing the decision of principle might be envisaged:

1. the Assembly's proposal;
2. attendance of the Secretary-General of N.A.T.O. at joint meetings;

/3. advance ...

3. advance preparation of the Council's replies with N.A.T.O., assistance from N.A.T.O. with supplementary questions at meetings to be ensured in some way to be determined;
4. assistance of N.A.T.O. national representatives at joint meetings.

The COUNCIL:

DECIDED to consider these suggestions further at the earliest opportunity, together with any other proposals that might be made.

(iii) Acceptance of the Assembly's proposal

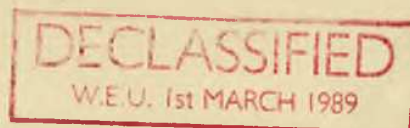
Mr. STIKKER said that his Government could accept the invitation, provided the attitude to be adopted by the Council was agreed beforehand.

Other delegations agreed with this view and

The COUNCIL:

AGREED to accept provisionally the invitation of the President of the Assembly for a joint meeting between the Council of Ministers and the Bureau of the Assembly, it being understood that the Council could not yet undertake to be ready to meet the representatives of the Assembly on 14th December.

The Council requested Sir Anthony Rumbold to get in touch with the President of the Assembly to explain the position.



W QUESTIONS...

EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF ^{99th} MEETING
 OF W.E.U. COUNCIL HELD ON 8 NOV. 57

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W.E.U. 1st MARCH 1989

V OTHER BUSINESS

2. Official visit of the Secretary-General of N.A.T.O. to the United Kingdom

Sir Anthony RUMBOLD recalled that it had been suggested he should say a few words about the recent visit of the Secretary-General of N.A.T.O. This had been a formal visit, and business conversations between M. Spaak and British Ministers had been very few and short. Three subjects had been discussed with Mr. Selwyn Lloyd: Cyprus, United Kingdom forces on the mainland of Europe and the December meeting of the North Atlantic Council. On the second, M. Spaak had been consulted as to how the question should be handled in N.A.T.O.; the upshot had been that it would have to be brought up shortly in N.A.T.O. by the United Kingdom representative, probably in the coming week. On the third subject, a general exchange of ideas had taken place with M. Spaak and it had appeared that his views were similar to those of the United Kingdom. He had agreed in thinking that it would be necessary to revise the provisional agenda of the meeting and to eliminate items which were not really suitable for discussion by heads of Government and, in several cases, were not yet ready for discussion. Furthermore, M. Spaak thought, and the United Kingdom agreed, that items which should be retained for discussion could be grouped under two main headings: 1) the nuclear aspects, and 2) what was meant by "interdependence" - co-ordination of research and division of labour, technical training of scientists, etc. M. Spaak also thought that at a session of this kind it would be very necessary not to try to hold all-day meetings - they might perhaps be held in the afternoons only. M. Spaak had been very insistent on the importance of the drafting of texts, and particularly the communiqué. He considered that this should not merely show that the heads of Government had met to reaffirm certain principles, but should make clear to the general public that they had taken decisions and established machinery to implement those principles. Thus there might be two communiqués, a short one dealing with the reaffirmation of principles and a longer one indicating the kind of machinery it had been decided to set up.

Delegations thanked Sir Anthony Rumbold for this information.

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I OTHER BUSINESS

3. Conference of members of parliament from the
 N.A.T.O. countries

The CHAIRMAN ^{M. Luffin} said that he would be attending the Conference of members of parliament from the N.A.T.O. countries which was to take place in Paris from 11th to 16th November; he would inform the Council of his impressions at the next meeting.

3. Conférence des parlementaires des pays membres de
 l'O.T.A.N.

Le PRESIDENT dit qu'il assistera à la Conférence des parlementaires des pays membres de l'O.T.A.N. qui doit se tenir à Paris du 11 au 16 novembre. Il en rendra compte au Conseil à la prochaine réunion.