

Draft introductory statement proposed by the French delegation (London, 19 October 1960)


Caption: In a note dated 19 October 1960, the Secretary-General of Western European Union (WEU) circulates a draft introductory statement proposed by the French delegation for the joint meeting of the Council and the Committee on Defence Questions and Armaments. The Council starts by explaining the reasons why some of the replies given to the Assembly are sometimes unsatisfactory, referring to the nature of WEU's powers in the military field. The Council's powers are limited to the level of forces of the Member States, the maintenance of British forces on the European continent, the control of armaments and some aspects of arms standardisation. Within the scope of its powers, the Council keeps the Assembly informed through its Annual Report (Article IX) and provides additional information to the committees. A procedure has also been developed with NATO for obtaining required information but this is subject to certain rules including the confidentiality of classified subjects. The Council concludes by pointing out that questions should be sent to the Council sufficiently early for this procedure to follow its course.

Source: Council of the Western European Union. Secretary-General's note. Joint meeting of the Council and the Committee on Defence Questions and Armaments. I. Draft introductory Statement. London: 19.10.1960. C (60) 147. Copy No 64. 4 p. Archives nationales de Luxembourg (ANLux). <http://www.anlux.lu>. Western European Union Archives. Secretariat-General/Council's Archives. 1954-1987. Organs of the Western European Union. Year: 1960, 01/20/1960-28/11/1960. File 202.413.06. Volume 1/1.

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19th October 1960

SECRETARY-GENERAL'S NOTE

Joint meeting of the Council and the
Committee on Defence Questions and Armaments

Draft Introductory Statement

(of C (60) 143)

The Secretary-General circulates herewith a draft proposed by the French delegation at the meeting of the Council on 19th October 1960.

Gr
9, Grosvenor Place,
London, S.W.1.

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Draft preliminary statement

Before any discussion of the questions which the Committee are to put to the Council, a number of general introductory remarks are called for to fill in the background to today's meeting.

The Council are aware that the replies to a large number of questions will not give satisfaction to the members of the Assembly's Committee on Defence Questions and Armaments. They feel that they owe it to the Assembly to explain the reasons for this state of affairs, which they regret as much as anybody.

The origin of the problem which concerns us lies in the nature of W.E.U.'s competence in the military field.

In 1948, the five Signatories of the Brussels Treaty set up machinery for mutual assistance.

Shortly afterwards, at the instigation of the United States, the same Powers agreed to extend the alliance to include both sides of the North Atlantic. The Treaty successfully concluded as a result of this move, had the inestimable advantage of ensuring for the five European members of the Brussels Treaty, not only the legal support of the United States and Canada, but also the effective presence of American and Canadian forces in Europe. The mutual assistance provided for under the Brussels Treaty was thus extended to a wider framework. There could be no question of retaining two separate machineries for the same purpose. By a Resolution dated 20th December 1950, the five Signatories of the Brussels Treaty therefore decided to transfer to NATO the military competence embodied in their original agreement.

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This had been the de facto and de jure position for almost four years when the revised Brussels Treaty was signed in Paris on 23rd October 1954, with new clauses providing, amongst other things, for the establishment of our Assembly. Article IV of this renewed agreement is the logical consequence of the state of affairs created by the Resolution of 1950. As you know it states that: "Recognising the undesirability of duplicating the military staffs of NATO, the Council and its Agency will rely on the appropriate military authorities of NATO for information and advice on military matters."

As a result, the activities of the Council with regard to defence and armaments are limited to those laid down in Article VIII of the Treaty, to the level of forces of member States under Protocol No. II of the Paris Agreements, to the maintenance of certain United Kingdom troops on the continent of Europe, to the control of armaments and to some aspects of arms standardisation.

The Council keep the Assembly duly informed through their Annual Report, as provided in Article IX of the Treaty.

They have also agreed to supply additional material at meetings of a special committee.

They cannot, however, supply information, on their own responsibility, on subjects outside their competence. Despite this fact, the Committee go back to the general provisions of the original Treaty, and taking no account of the 1950 Resolution and Article IV of the revised Treaty, put questions to the Council on problems, which for ten years have been the sole responsibility of NATO.

/To meet ...

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To meet the preoccupations of the Assembly, the Council, with assistance from the NATO civilian and military authorities, worked out a procedure for obtaining the required information. NATO, which alone has the necessary material, agreed to supply W.E.U. with the elements of replies. In addition, senior officers from NATO military commands are authorised to attend joint meetings between the Committee and the Council, as advisers to the Chairman.

This complicated machinery can only function through NATO's willingness to co-operate.

The extent of co-operation is qualified by that Organisation's set-up and internal regulations. Sometimes, therefore, problems raised by the Assembly are under discussion between NATO member Governments when replies are requested. NATO can supply no information on such conversations until provisional conclusions have been submitted and discussed by the North Atlantic Council. Furthermore, many of the questions asked relate to classified subjects and no answer can be given.

Apart from these difficulties, I would point out that nothing useful can be achieved if questions reach the Council so late that the procedure I have described cannot follow its normal course. A period of three weeks, of which we have a recent example, is not long enough.

This concludes the remarks which the Council asked me to make before detailed discussion of your questions.

I would most strongly urge you to bear them in mind during the debate which is to follow. In particular, I would ask you to bear them in mind whenever in future your Committee puts questions to the Council.

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