

involving the non-nuclear members of the Alliance in NATO's nuclear affairs. Since its establishment, the NPG has widened participation in the nuclear decision-making process and has created an awareness among Alliance members of the factors which would have to be taken into account if the release of nuclear weapons were ever to be considered. The NPG consists of four permanent members — Germany, Italy, Britain and the United States — which are joined by three or four rotating members serving for 18-month periods.

The North Atlantic Council, the Defence Planning Committee and the Nuclear Planning Group are all chaired by the Secretary-General of NATO. All NATO bodies reach decision by consensus rather than by majority vote. The Secretary-General is also the head of the NATO International Staff, which provides the administrative support for a large part of the Alliance's activities.