94. To ensure the closest possible connection between current thinking in the governments and consultations in the Council, there might be occasional Council meetings with the participation of specially designated officials or the permanent heads of foreign ministries.

C. Preparation for Council Meetings

95. Items on the Agenda of Ministerial meetings should be thoroughly examined by Permanent Representatives and relevant proposals prepared before Ministers meet. For this purpose it may be found desirable for governments to send senior experts to consult on agenda items before the meetings take place.

96. The preparation of questions for discussion in the Council should be assisted by appropriate use of the Council's Committees of Political and Economic Advisers. (Recommendations on the establishment of these Committees are set forth in Chapter 2, paragraph 56, and Chapter 3, paragraph 72).

97. In the case of consultations on special subjects, more use should be made of senior experts from national capitals to assist permanent delegations by calling them, on an ad hoc basis, to do preparatory work. Informal discussions among specialists with corresponding responsibilities are a particularly valuable means of concerting governmental attitudes in the early stages of policy formation.

98. Member governments should make available to one another through NATO "basic position material" for background information. This would help the Alliance as a whole in the consideration of problems of common concern and would assist individual governments to understand more fully the reasons for the position adopted by any member country on a particular issue which might be its special concern, but which might also affect in varying degrees other members of NATO.

D. The Secretary-General and the International Staff

99. To enable the Organization to make its full contribution, the role of the Secretary-General and the International Staff needs to be enhanced.

100. It is recommended that the Secretary-General preside over meetings of the Council in Ministerial, as he does now in other sessions. Such a change with respect to the conduct of the Council's business would follow naturally from the new responsibilities of the Secretary-General, arising out of the recommendations of this report. It is also warranted by the Secretary-General's unique opportunities for becoming familiar with the problems and the activities of the Alliance as a whole.

101. It would, however, still be desirable to have one Minister chosen each year as President of the Council in accordance with the present practice of alphabetical rotation. This Minister, as President, would continue to have especially close contact with the Secretary-General during and between Ministerial Meetings, and would, as at present, act as the spokesman of the Council on all formal occasions. He would also preside at the formal opening and closing of Ministerial sessions of the Council.