

that the signatories "will contribute toward the further development of peaceful and friendly international relations by strengthening their free institutions, by bringing about a better understanding of the principles upon which these institutions are founded, and by promoting conditions of stability and well-being". "They will seek," the article goes on, "to eliminate conflict in their international economic policies and will encourage economic collaboration between any or all of them." It is this article that provides the framework for the increasingly important "non-military" aspects of the Alliance's activities.

Article 9 of the Treaty provides for the establishment of the Organization's governing body, the North Atlantic Council. There are generally two meetings of the Council each year attended by foreign ministers — an autumn meeting in Brussels and a spring meeting that rotates among the capitals of NATO countries. Between these ministerial gatherings, the Council meets at least once a week at NATO headquarters in Brussels at the level of permanent representatives. These representatives, who have the rank of ambassador, head the national delegations accredited to NATO. The Council is assisted in its activities by a series of committees and agencies covering a wide range of interests.

When France withdrew from the integrated defence system of the Alliance in 1966, the Defence Planning Committee, made up of representatives from the 14 remaining Alliance members, assumed responsibility for dealing with all questions concerning NATO's collective defence activities. Like the Council, the DPC meets twice yearly at the defence-minister level and, in the intervals, at the permanent-representative level.

Certain ministers of defence also attend twice-yearly meetings of NATO's Nuclear Planning Group. The NPG was established in 1966 as a forum for 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 that would have to be taken into account if the release of nuclear weapons were even 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.