

Between these ministerial meetings, the Council meets at least once a week at NATO headquarters in Brussels at the level of permanent representatives. These permanent 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 level of defence ministers and at the level of permanent representatives in the intervals.

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