

49. Another limitation is the difficulty, and indeed the unwisdom, of trying to specify in advance all the subjects and all the situations where consultation is necessary; to separate by area or by subject the matters of NATO concern from those of purely national concern; to define in detail the obligations and duties of consultation. These things have to work themselves out in practice. In this process, experience is a better guide than dogma.

50. The essential thing is that on all occasions and in all circumstances member governments before acting or even before pronouncing, should keep the interests and the requirements of the Alliance in mind. If they have **not** the desire and the will to do this, no resolutions or recommendations or declarations by the Council or any Committee of the Council will be of any great value.

51. On the assumption, however, that this will and this desire do exist, the following principles and practices in the field of political consultation are recommended:

- (a) Members should inform the Council of any development which significantly affects the Alliance. They should do this, not merely as a formality but as a preliminary to effective political consultation.
- (b) Both individual member governments and the Secretary-General should have the right to raise for discussion in the Council any subject which is of common NATO interest and not of a purely domestic character.
- (c) A member government should not, without adequate advance consultation, adopt firm policies or make major political pronouncements on matters which significantly affect the Alliance or any of its members, unless circumstances make such prior consultation obviously and demonstrably impossible.
- (d) In developing their national policies, members should take into consideration the interests and views of other governments, particularly those most directly concerned, as expressed in NATO consultation, even where no community of view or consensus has been reached in the Council.
- (e) Where a consensus has been reached, it should be reflected in the formation of national policies. When for national reasons the consensus is not followed, the government concerned should offer an explanation to the Council. It is even more important that where an agreed and formal recommendation has emerged from the Council discussions, governments should give it full weight in any national actions or policies related to the subject of that recommendation.

#### B. Annual Political Appraisal

52. To strengthen the process of consultation, it is recommended that Foreign Ministers, at each Spring meeting, should make an appraisal of the political progress of the Alliance and consider the lines along which it should advance.

53. To prepare for this discussion, the Secretary-General should submit an annual report:

- (a) analysing the major political problems of the Alliance;