individual and collective capacity of its members to serve the peaceful purposes for which NATO was established. ... In the political field, this means that while each North Atlantic Government retains full freedom of action and decision with respect to its own policy, the aim should be to achieve, through exchanging information and views, as wide an area of agreement as possible in the formulation of policies as a whole.

.....

"Special attention must be paid, as explicitly recognised in Article 4 of the Treaty, to matters of urgent and immediate importance to the members of NATO, and to 'emergency' situations where it may be necessary to consult closely on national lines of conduct affecting the interests of members of NATO as a whole. There is a continuing need, however, for effective consultation at an early stage on current problems, in order that national policies may be developed and action taken on the basis of a full awareness of the attitudes and interests of all the members of NATO. While all members of NATO have a responsibility to consult with their partners on appropriate matters, a large share of responsibility for such consultation necessarily rests on the more powerful members of the Community."

44. These words were written five years ago. They hold true now more than ever before. If we can say that they have not been ignored by NATO we must also recognize that the practice of consulting has not so developed in the NATO Council as to meet the demands of political changes and world trends. The present need, therefore, is more than simply broadening the scope and deepening the character of consultation. There is a pressing requirement for all members to make consultation in NATO an integral part of the making of national policy. Without this the very existence of the North Atlantic Community may be in jeopardy.

45. It should, however, be remembered that collective discussion is not an end in itself, but a means to the end of harmonizing policies. Where common interests of the Atlantic Community are at stake consultation should always seek to arrive at timely agreement on common lines of policy and action.

46. Such agreement, even with the closest possible co-operation and consultation, is not easy to secure. But it is essential to the Atlantic Alliance that a steady and continuous effort be made to bring it about. There cannot be unity in defence and disunity in foreign policy.

47. There are, of course, certain practical limitations to consultation in this field. They are sufficiently obvious in fact to make it unnecessary to emphasise them in words. Indeed the danger is less that they will be minimised or evaded than that they will be exaggerated and used to justify practices which unnecessarily ignore the common interest.

48. One of these limitations is the hard fact that ultimate responsibility for decision and action still rests on national governments. It is conceivable that a situation of extreme emergency may arise when action must be taken by one government before consultation is possible with the others.