

Extract from minutes of the 477th meeting of the WEU Council (24 April 1974)

Caption: At its 477th meeting on 24 April 1974, in the section on questions concerning the Assembly, the WEU Council notes that the working group instructed with drafting a reply to Recommendation 243 of the Assembly on the state of European security and relations with the United States has not been able to reach an agreement. British representative Sir John Killick, Deputy to the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, emphasises that the aim is not just to give a precise definition of the role of the Nuclear Planning Group of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) but also to avoiding giving the impression that the establishment of a nuclear planning committee, as recommended by the Assembly, is something that will be pursued. He also understands France's difficulty in agreeing that reference should be made to the NATO Nuclear Planning Group in a WEU document in the name of all the members. Jacques Delarue Caron de Beaumarchais, French Ambassador to the United Kingdom, does not see why the WEU Council should deal with questions concerning the NATO members in a reply to the Assembly. The question will be considered further at the next meeting.

Source: Council of the Western European Union. Extract from minutes of the 477th meeting of WEU Council held on 24 April 1974. IV. Questions concerning the Assembly. CR (74) 8. pp. 20-22. Archives nationales de Luxembourg (ANLux). <http://www.anlux.lu>. Western European Union Archives. Secretariat-General/Council's Archives. 1954-1987. Organs of the Western European Union. Year: 1973, 01/11/1973-20/09/1974. File 202.413.999.09. Volume 1/1.

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http://www.cvce.eu/obj/extract_from_minutes_of_the_477th_meeting_of_the_weu_council_24_april_1974-en-39e10185-b36d-4b78-b10d-74240532ecoc.html

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IV QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE ASSEMBLY

3. Draft Replies to Assembly Recommendations

- Recommendation 243 on the state of European security - relations with the United States
(C (74) 59)

The CHAIRMAN said that the working group had several times discussed the draft reply to this Recommendation and, in particular, the inclusion of a remark which the United Kingdom delegation wished to make concerning point 3 of the Recommendation.

Despite efforts to reach a solution acceptable to all delegations, the working group had been unable to agree on this point. The latest of the texts proposed by the United Kingdom delegation appeared in square brackets in document C (74) 59, which was now before the Council.

This document also included between square brackets a form of words suggested at the last meeting of the working group by which the Council would, if the situation arose, inform the Assembly that they were not in a position to answer Recommendation 243.

Sir John KILLICK explained that an exact definition of the role of the NATO Nuclear Planning Group was not the British delegation's sole concern; their basic purpose was to avoid giving the impression that the creation of a nuclear planning committee, as recommended by the Assembly, was an aspect of European defence which might be examined at some time in the future.

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CR (74) 8

The British delegation understood, however, the French delegation's difficulty in agreeing that reference should be made to the NATO Nuclear Planning Group in a W.E.U. document in the name of all member governments.

Sir John wondered whether the problem might not be resolved by adding a comment to point 3, in brackets, referring only to member governments which were also members of the Group, and worded as follows: "In case there should be any misunderstanding, those member governments also members of the NATO Nuclear Planning Group point out that the Nuclear Planning Group is not concerned only with United States nuclear forces." This would be in line with the practice followed for the drafting of certain articles in NATO communiqués, referring to EUROGROUP or M.B.F.R.

M. de BEAUMARCHAIS first thanked the working group for its efforts and regretted that no agreement had been reached.

He went on to say that while paragraphs in NATO communiqués concerning defence questions with which France could not associate herself were, in fact, drafted exclusively in the name of the other member countries, the tradition at W.E.U. was, so far as he knew, different in the case of replies to texts received from the Assembly.

Furthermore, he could not see why the Council of W.E.U. should be obliged to deal with a problem which concerned the members of NATO in a reply to the Assembly. He thought it would be sufficient to keep only the first two sentences of the draft submitted by the working group. If any government had special difficulty in accepting this, it could take steps at national level to make any further comments to its own parliamentarians who were members of the Assembly.

/Sir John KILLICK explained ...

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Sir John KILLICK explained that his delegation feared that a reply by the Council limited to the first two sentences of the draft under consideration might lead the British parliamentarians to ask a question in the House of Commons on a matter which the Government did not wish to discuss at this stage.

He wondered whether it might not be possible to add a sentence in brackets to the draft, which would not mention the NATO Nuclear Planning Group, but would state that the wording of point 3 of the Recommendation did not seem to reflect the facts of the situation correctly. This would leave the way open for unilateral comment by a British Minister addressing the Assembly.

M. ROTHSCHILD would be satisfied with the first two sentences of the draft reply, which he thought covered the whole problem. He could also accept an additional sentence simply stating the facts.

On the other hand, he wondered whether comments by one government in the Assembly might not lead other governments to make statements, with the risk of revealing differences of opinion. He therefore thought that an effort should be made to work out a joint reply satisfactory to all concerned.

After further discussion, it was agreed to consider the question further at the Council's next meeting.