

Draft reply from the United Kingdom delegation to the WEU Council to Recommendation No 68 on the Standing Armaments Committee and the joint production of armaments (London, 21 November 1961)

Caption: In a note dated 21 November 1961, the Secretary-General circulates the draft reply by the United Kingdom delegation to the Council of Western European Union (WEU) to Assembly Recommendation No 68 on the Standing Armaments Committee and the joint production of armaments. The Council supports the principle of interdependence in the production of armaments as a means of making savings in costs and manpower and increasing military efficiency. All the WEU Member States are in favour of strengthening cooperation in armaments production, both in WEU and in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). The Council is in agreement with the paragraphs, although it expresses some reservations since joint production is not a universal panacea. When it comes to selecting projects and distributing production between the Member States of WEU and NATO, this should be done rationally so as to avoid unnecessary duplication and to make sure that joint production is only pursued when it is the quickest and cheapest option for securing new arms for Western defence. The Council also recognises the difficulties experienced by the Standing Armaments Committee (SAC); the national representatives are currently in consultation with the Director and Secretariat to ascertain whether any additional work can be undertaken by the SAC.

Source: Council of the Western European Union. Secretary-General's note. Assembly Recommendation N°68 on the Standing Armaments Committee and the joint production armaments. London: 21.11.1961. C (61)182. Copy N° 67. 3 p. 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: 1960, 01/03/1960- 30/05/1962. File 202.411.05. Volume 1/1 .

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SECRETARY-GENERAL'S NOTE

Assembly Recommendation No. 68 on the Standing Armaments Committee and the joint production of armaments

The Secretary-General circulates herewith a draft reply to Recommendation No. 68 proposed by the United Kingdom delegation (cf. CR (61) 16, III, 1; CR (61) 19, IV, 1).

This draft will be placed on the agenda of the next Council meeting, to be held on 24th November 1961.

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Draft Reply to Recommendation No. 68

The Council of Western European Union supports the principle of interdependence in the production of armaments, with a view to achieving savings in costs and in manpower and in increasing military efficiency.

2. The Assembly will be aware, from the Council's written reply of 6th November 1961 to question No. 6 of the Committee on Defence Questions and Armaments, that member Governments give their full support to all useful measures designed to strengthen co-operation in the field of defence production, both within W.E.U. and NATO.

3. The Council considers that, given the circumstances, the progress so far made in W.E.U. and in NATO is reasonably satisfactory. It is not, however, easy to identify, in quantitative terms, the full results of the work performed by the Armaments Committees of W.E.U. and NATO, or the benefits which have flowed from the close co-operation between experts in many fields over recent years. For example, much wasted effort and expenditure has been avoided because member countries, having been made aware of the ideas and work of their Allies, did not undertake work which they might otherwise have begun. Moreover, modern weapons may take as long as ten years to develop. Member Governments have naturally been reluctant to abandon projects already under development, and the greatest scope for co-operation must inevitably lie in meeting the longer term requirements.

4. The Council is in agreement with paragraphs 3, 4 and 5 of the Recommendation and also, subject to certain reservations, with paragraphs 1 and 2. Joint production, although it can furnish the best solution to many problems of armaments development, is not a universal panacea. It is important, when projects are selected and production is distributed between the member countries of the Atlantic and W.E.U. Alliances, to ensure that this is done in such a way that unnecessary duplication is avoided and the best weapons and equipment are selected for general use. Equally, bilateral and multilateral production should not be permitted to delay the introduction into service of modern weapons or to result in an increase of costs; it should only be arranged when there is a clear advantage in doing so. In some cases, it may be more economical and efficient for individual countries to specialise in the development of and production of those types of weapon or equipment which they are best qualified to provide. Joint production should therefore be pursued not for its own sake, but where it can secure new weapons for the Western Alliances more quickly and more cheaply. In the division of labour, the aim should be rationalisation, not fragmentation.

/5. With regard

W.E.U. CONFIDENTIAL

C (61) 182

5. With regard to paragraphs 6 and 7 of the Recommendation, the Council is aware of the difficulties experienced by the Standing Armaments Committee. The Representatives of member Governments on the Committee are currently engaged in discussions with the Director and Secretariat with a view to ascertaining whether there is additional work which the Committee could profitably undertake.

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