

Recommendation 281 of the WEU Assembly on European and Atlantic cooperation in the field of armaments (Paris, 4 December 1975)

Caption: On 4 December 1975, the Assembly of Western European Union (WEU) adopts Recommendation 281 on European and Atlantic cooperation in the field of armaments. The Assembly outlines to the Council the aims that the Member States are committed to pursuing, including strengthening the defence potential of the Atlantic Alliance so as to maintain the balance of forces which is essential for the security of free Europe. The document also emphasises the vital importance of establishing Atlantic and European cooperation in armaments standardisation and production, and notes that WEU has a specific role to play. The Assembly recommends to the Council that particular attention should be paid to the problem of destandardisation, given the unilateral developments in each country, and that the member governments should give absolute priority at political level to the question of cooperation in the field of armaments.

Source: Assembly of Western European Union. ‘Recommendation 281 on European and Atlantic co-operation in the field of armaments (Paris, fourteenth sitting, 4th December 1975)’ in Proceedings: Twenty-first ordinary session: Second Part, Vol. IV, Minutes: Official Report of Debates. Paris: Assembly of WEU. December 1975, pp. 54-55.

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Last updated: 13/10/2016

RECOMMENDATION 281***on European and Atlantic co-operation in the field of armaments***

The Assembly,

- (i) Having considered the present situation of research, development and production in the field of armaments in the light of the report by its Defence Committee;
- (ii) Informed of the important statements made to it in Paris on 5th December 1974 by Mr. Van Elslande, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium, on a joint European armaments policy;
- (iii) Aware that, despite progress made in this field in the framework of the Atlantic Alliance, for instance the principles on co-operation in the field of armaments laid down by Eurogroup on 23rd May 1972, new concrete possibilities exist, particularly among the member countries of WEU, for a decisive improvement in co-operation where the active collaboration of France would be a great advantage;
- (iv) Noting that the serious economic situation affecting most member countries of the Alliance and the ensuing budgetary difficulties have repercussions on the defence potential;
- (v) Underlining consequently the urgent need to rationalise the defence effort of all the member countries in order to avoid waste due to the multiplication of projects for weapons or weapons systems and the wide diversity of models produced for one and the same defence task;
- (vi) Aware that, in view of the geographical situation of Europe, deterrence, if it is to be credible, also requires conventional forces and that national armed forces should be able to operate jointly to achieve a strong defence potential with chances of success;
- (vii) Considering that a growing awareness is developing among governments, parliaments, public opinion and national and international groups and that a flow of ideas is developing which should allow the necessary measures to be taken in the framework of WEU and the Atlantic Alliance;
- (viii) Aware of national interests in the field of armaments and their importance for security of employment, but convinced that they do not preclude either bilateral or multilateral co-operation and, on the contrary, make it appear far more rational;
- (ix) Noting the initiatives and suggestions from across the Atlantic seeking to establish new means of co-operation between the United States and the countries of Western Europe in the field of armaments;
- (x) Noting also the proposals made by the Commission of the European Communities in its report on European union dated 26th June 1975;
- (xi) Aware of the agreement in principle reached by the Defence Ministers of the European countries on 5th November 1975 to establish a European defence procurement secretariat open to all European members of the Alliance,

RECOMMENDS THAT THE COUNCIL

1. Recognise that the aims which member countries are committed to pursue in the framework of the Atlantic Alliance on a basis of equal rights and obligations are :
 - (a) to strengthen the defence potential of the Alliance as a whole, especially in Europe, so as to establish, in the face of the continuously increasing armaments of the Warsaw Pact, the balance of forces which is essential to the security of free Europe and the progress of East-West relations;
 - (b) to maintain a technical potential in the countries of Western Europe and develop a competitive European armaments industry with sufficient means for research and production;
 - (c) to seek a better balance between the means available on both sides of the Atlantic and establish reciprocity in respect of the procurement and production of armaments;

- (d) to promote a European identity and the idea of European union by implementing effective and lasting co-operation in the fields of research, development, production and logistics which are still a national responsibility and hence require governments to take decisions based on defence requirements and the joint interest of the Western European countries ;
2. Welcome the decision of the North Atlantic Council that, at its spring meeting, a special meeting should be held at ministerial level to study Atlantic and European co-operation in the field of armaments, and give it its full support ;
3. (a) Take up on behalf of WEU the declaration on principles of equipment co-operation adopted on 27th May 1972 by the Ministers of Defence of Belgium, Denmark, the Federal Republic, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Turkey and the United Kingdom ;
- (b) Organise the development of new weapons allowing a high return to be ensured and economic solutions to be found ;
- (c) Establish within the Atlantic Alliance detailed political guidelines covering the following fields and take a decision on them :
- harmonisation of military tactical concepts ;
 - definition of military requirements of the Alliance ;
 - alignment of equipment, calibres, fuel, etc., in order to ensure the interoperability of arms and equipment and improve logistics in the armed forces of the Alliance ;
 - the standardisation of future armaments and equipment programmes ;
- (d) Pay particular attention to the problem of destandardisation of armaments due to the proliferation of projects in each country and above all to the creation of new weapons systems accompanied by the use of older systems ;
- (e) Examine the means of reactivating the Standing Armaments Committee ;
4. Urge member governments :
- (a) with regard to research, development and production, to endorse fully the measures necessary for carrying out joint undertakings with as many partners as possible ;
- (b) to seek means to avoid the economy of a country being affected by giving up an armaments programme in favour of a joint undertaking ; to this end, consideration might be given to setting up a burden-sharing body ; this should be decided with other appropriate bodies ;
- (c) to draw up a list of programmes for armaments which might be procured jointly both by European countries and by the North American allies ; WEU should launch this idea and the decision should be taken with the Atlantic Alliance ;
- (d) to give active consideration to the practical possibilities in Western Europe of establishing in the long term a two-way transatlantic flow of trade in armaments, ensuring that this becomes possible only when the countries of Western Europe co-operate in the development and production of armaments as real partners carrying the same weight as the United States ;
- (e) to pay particular attention to the export of armaments to non-member countries of the Atlantic Alliance and endeavour to ensure an early settlement of outstanding questions ;
5. Report to the Assembly on the results of its study on the possibility of giving WEU additional tasks connected with the standardisation of armaments in Europe ;
6. Give absolute priority at political level to problems of co-operation in the field of armaments and the standardisation of armaments and not become discouraged in the short or long term by the difficulties involved ;
7. Transmit the present recommendation to the North Atlantic Council.