MEMORANDUM

To: Permanent Representatives

From: Secretary General

Force Goals and Priorities

At the Private Meeting of the Council which took place on Wednesday, 9th November 1955, the Standing Group Liaison Officer was asked to circulate the views of the Standing Group on the procedure for providing nations with advice on priorities and other questions relating to defence.

2. The Standing Group memorandum in question is therefore annexed.

(Signed) ISMAY

14th November 1955
PROCEDURE FOR PROVIDING NATIONS WITH ADVICE ON PRIORITIES AND OTHER QUESTIONS RELATING TO DEFENCE

Note by the SGLO

1. After considered reflection, the Standing Group regrets that it now must withdraw its unqualified agreement with the interpretation of the particular aspect of priorities as stated by the Secretary General in the closing moments of the Defence Ministers' Conference, and as recorded in C-R(55)45. The Standing Group is of the opinion that the procedure set out there might, in effect, place the Standing Group in the position of recommending reductions in force goals to which countries had already committed themselves to the Council. The Standing Group is of the further opinion that only the Council can accept changes in countries' commitments. However, the Standing Group is prepared to offer advice as to adjustments in defence programmes designed to assist the implementation of important military recommendations, provided such adjustments or modifications maintain the overall strength of NATO contributions. If the Council should desire that the Standing Group be given authority to make recommendations involving reductions in the overall strength of NATO contributions, the Standing Group feels that its present terms of reference would have to be changed, and the politico-economic guidance that would govern its considerations would have to be furnished by the Council.

2. The Standing Group notes that the following approved procedures are now in effect for providing individual nations with advice on priorities in their defence efforts:

(a) The military concept which is the basis for broad guidance to all nations of NATO is contained in the M.O.1 series of papers, which are periodically reviewed and brought up to date. The guidance in these papers is necessarily broad but indicates so far as is possible the minimum measures required to implement a forward strategy in a war involving the employment of atomic weapons.

(b) In the country chapters of the Annual Review are incorporated priority recommendations to individual countries. Major Commanders submit recommendations in general order of priority within each service, and additionally list separately those recommendations they consider should be put into the category "Most important recommendations regardless of service". The Standing Group integrates Commanders' "most important" recommendations for incorporation into the country chapters. All of these recommendations are based upon the latest military plans and concepts.

(c) Additionally, in C-M(55)20, Commanders are directed to "advise on priorities within the area which concerns them when countries, in accordance with the terms of the resolutions of the 1954 and 1955 reviews, consult them about possible adjustments in defence programmes designed to assist the implementation of important military recommendations." The Standing Group wishes to emphasise to the Council that SACEUR reports that he has seldom been thus consulted.
3. Some national authorities may, however, wish specific guidance as to their individual national programmes. The problems of individual nations are so varied that the Standing Group believes that such specific advice must necessarily be provided on a bilateral basis between the nation concerned and the NATO military authorities. The NATO military authority best qualified to give the advice will vary according to the problem. The Standing Group is anxious that the most appropriate source should be consulted. Accordingly, the Standing Group wishes to suggest that any NATO nation may seek advice as to priorities or changes in composition of its forces in one or more of the following ways:

(a) By approaching those NATO Subordinate Commanders with whom their forces are intimately associated.

(b) By approaching Supreme Commanders concerned.

(c) Where the problem is broader than the responsibilities of one Supreme Commander, by approaching the Standing Group.

4. Within the procedures listed above, which the Standing Group believes to be the most appropriate at the present time, the NATO Military Organization is prepared to look at a country's programme as a whole and give specific advice if requested to do so. In short, therefore, the whole NATO Military Organization is available and anxious to help individual nations to solve their problems, whether they be of a particular and technical nature, or related to overall programmes.

5. In addition, the Standing Group considers that, should the NATO military authorities be approached by a country for advice, it would seem advisable that this country, through the appropriate national organization:

(a) Make available to the NATO military authorities that information which they require in order to enable them to offer the best possible advice.

(b) Request military advice in the form of specific questions.

6. The Standing Group is fully aware that a procedure for establishing priorities represents only one aspect of a number of inter-related problems. However, the Standing Group is not prepared at this time to give its views on these other related problems but urges that the Council not make firm decisions to change any established procedures in these matters until it has (a) considered the final edition of M.C.48/1, (b) studied the 1955 Annual Review Report, (c) considered the military comments on the 1955 Annual Review.