COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION AND CULTURAL RELATIONS
NATO AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Note by the Secretary

On 28th June, 1957, the Committee discussed a note by the United States Delegation on this subject (AC/52-D/243). The conclusions reached are recorded in AC/52-R/77, Item III.

2. I have now received from the Canadian Delegation the Canadian authorities' comments on the Committee's discussion, with the request that these should be circulated for information (see Annex attached).

3. Any member of the Committee having observations to make on this paper might wish to do so at one of our future meetings (under "Any Other Business").

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NATO AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Canadian comments on the Information Committee discussion on 28th June of document AC/52-D/243

While the wording of the minutes of the Information Committee of 28th June indicate that the proposals contained in paragraph 3 of document AC/52-D/243 are to be implemented "as far as practicable" it might be useful to clarify for record purposes the interpretation that delegations would apply to that phrase. The following are therefore Canadian comments on the subject generally.

2. As a general guiding principle we consider that non-governmental organizations (whether related to the United Nations or not) ought to be free from governmental interference. The fact that Communist-dominated organizations in this category are employed as effective instruments of the Communist Party should, in our view, be regarded as justification for government intervention generally in the actual administration of reputable non-governmental organizations. However, governments may on occasion provide counsel to, or even in some cases try to influence the programmes of some non-governmental organizations, particularly those which might otherwise become an easy prey to Communist agitators or fellow travellers. For example, in the case of the recent World Youth Festival in Moscow we provided some suitable delegates with background information on the Canadian Government's attitude on such questions as disarmament, Hungary, etc., in order that they might be in a position to show up Communist propaganda at that conference. Furthermore, we consider that NATO governments are justified in trying to curb the influence and status of certain dangerous Communist front organizations. For example, at a recent session of ECOSOC Canada supported decisions of the Non-Governmental Organizations Committee of the Council barring the World Democratic Youth and the International Association of Democratic Lawyers from preferential consultation status with the United Nations.

3. With respect to NATO consultation on moving the site of particular non-governmental conferences, we would wish to avoid any action which might lay NATO open to the charge of performing as a bloc. Moreover, we are also of the opinion that some meetings of non-governmental organizations behind the Iron Curtain are not necessarily undesirable. A primary consideration for NATO countries should be to try to ensure that Western nations are effectively represented whatever the locale of the meeting. With respect to consultation on the positions to be taken by delegates of NATO countries, we do not interpret this part of document AC/52-D/243 as meaning that such delegates should as a matter of practice receive instructions from other governments although, as in the case of the recent Moscow Youth Festival, it may on occasion
be desirable to exchange views in the Information Committee as to whether and along what lines member governments might undertake to brief or advise trustworthy delegates to particular conferences.

4. To sum up, we consider that normally NATO should not become involved in the internal policies of non-governmental organizations, although we recognise that NATO has a legitimate interest in certain activities of non-governmental organizations and, therefore, member governments should consult in the Information Committee about these activities. Moreover, and especially with respect to meetings of non-governmental organizations in which there may be strong Communist influence, it will on occasion be desirable to concert views in the Information Committee as to whether and along what lines member governments should undertake to brief or advise trustworthy delegates to conferences of certain non-governmental bodies, or whether other appropriate action is required. In the majority of cases, however, because of the different relationships which may be involved in each NATO country the attitude that governments take towards their national representatives on non-governmental organizations is obviously a matter which must be left to each member government.

5. The above considerations were discussed by the Committee during its review of document AC/52-D/243 on 28th June, and it is our understanding that they underlie the Committee's decision to implement paragraph 3 of the document "as far as practicable".

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