



Explanation on the work of the North Atlantic Council

Seeing the differences between the North Atlantic Council (NAC) and IMUNA's other forums, we have set up this document, explaining the work of and the special Rules of Procedure in the NAC.

Background of NATO

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), of which the NAC is the civilian arm, is an intergovernmental military alliance that was established at the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty on the 4th of April 1949. NATO has 12 original founding member nation states from North America and Europe, and through April 2009 it has added 16 more member nations.¹

The NATO has its goal to fulfil the goals of the North Atlantic Treaty, including safeguarding freedom and security of its Member States, by both political and military means.

In dispute over a nuclear defence programme, France withdrew from the integrated command of NATO in 1966 and all NATO forces left France, while the headquarters were moved from Paris to Brussels. Consequently, France has a special arrangement with regards to its involvement with NATO. At the committee level, France has full representation with the exception of the Defence Planning Committee, where it has an observer status. This means that France may participate in discussions and the drafting of communiqués, but will not be accorded a vote. At the Council level, France has full representation except for when addressing substantive military matters, where it has the same observer status.

Although it is often believed that Russia is a part of NATO, this is not the case. In 1997, Russia did become a partner country of NATO, and in 2002 a Russia-NATO Council was established, however it is not a NATO member. At the moment of writing this document, NATO has released an official statement regarding its relation with Russia. As a consequence of the unrest in eastern-Ukraine, the NATO-Russia relationship has significantly changed, and according to a NATO Deputy Secretary-General, Russia is not seen as a partner anymore, but as an opponent. It is recommended to delegates to do proper research on the NATO-Russia relationship, since the situation can change prior to the IMUNA conference.

Background of the NAC

The North Atlantic Council is composed of the 28 permanent representatives of the NATO members. The NAC is the only part of the NATO that was originally set up by the North Atlantic Treaty. The NAC has some powers that are important to know about, including the following:

- The NAC has the power to set up subsidiary bodies if this is deemed necessary;
- The NAC has the same authorities and powers of decision-making as higher powers, such as foreign ministers.

¹ The list of members of the Alliance can be found under the following link:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Member_states_of_NATO



Furthermore, it is very important to always keep in mind that in principle, the NAC adopts its decisions unanimously.

Communiqués

Instead of a resolution, a communiqué on every issue will be drafted in the NAC during IMUNA. The drafted communiqué is the publication of the decision of the NATO, and it is in that sense comparable to UN Resolutions. However, a communiqué should be a statement of collective intentions, as it should be approved by all members of the Council, and so a unanimous vote is needed to pass the communiqué.

Writing a communiqué

In principle, a communiqué will be drafted during an ad hoc debate. However, in order to improve the quality of this debate, the Presidency can decide to have some informal lobbying time first, where delegates can communicate with each other about their ideas for the communiqué.

Communiqués are quite comparable to normal UN Resolutions: a communiqué is one long sentence, that usually only contains operative clauses but that can, from time to time, contain preambulatory clauses as well. The operative clauses are either statements of intended action or declarations of an effect the NATO is of the opinion of, and the preambulatory clauses are general statements preceding the main part of the communiqué that is stated in the operative clauses. Preambulatory clauses can also contain facts and opinions that may be essential to the communiqué. Important to note is that statements of action are never formulated in preambulatory clauses. They should always be phrased in operative clauses.

Adopting a communiqué

After a communiqué has been drafted during an ad hoc debate, the communiqué will once again be discussed, clause by clause. During this, delegates are able to submit their reservations. After submitting these reservations, the communiqué will be voted upon.

As stated before, a unanimous vote is needed for a communiqué to be passed. To achieve this, strong negotiation between the delegates is needed. Sometimes however, it is impossible to achieve a consensus on an issue. In case a member is dissenting, he has three options before him:

1. Go along with the wishes of the majority and support the communiqué:
While this means going against the wishes of their countries, a country may sometimes choose to take such course of action in exchange for other concessions, such as economic aid;
2. Support the communiqué with a reservation to a particular point of clause:
In this way of demonstrating, a country is in support of the general intentions of the communiqué but has a reservation of a particular course of action, to which it intends not to participate in. Choosing to put a reservation on the communiqué may be regarded as a sign of goodwill by a country, however it diminishes the power of a communiqué for its lack of unanimity, and therefore it is *not* encouraged.



Countries that intend to put a reservation must seriously consider its position and the effect of a reservation, as must the other countries supporting the point that has been reserved. It is highly recommended that all countries engage in further negotiations before passing a communiqué on a reservation. If many countries put a reservation on a communiqué, the communiqué is effectively without any strength and the Council would be in a situation where it would have to seriously reconsider the course of action to be taken as a consequence of the communiqué. A reservation to a communiqué must be expressed in the communiqué by an asterisk with an explanatory footnote;

3. Veto the communiqué:

Vetoing a communiqué is an action not to be taken lightly. It is a sign of strong disagreement with the course of action to be taken by the Council, and it is often the result of poor negotiation. When such occurs, Council members need to return to the negotiation stage to find an alternative course of action that can be agreed upon.

Seeing the aforementioned status of France in NATO, passing a communiqué never needs the consent of France. It is however, strongly advised to seek for French consent, as dissent could be published in newspapers, and will weaken the effect of the unanimity of the Council.

Lastly, abstentions are not allowed while voting in the NAC.

Rules of Procedure in the NAC

At IMUNA, the NAC follows the common GA Rules of Procedure. The debate in the NAC knows three stages:

1. Consultative session:

This is the stage of informal lobbying, where members can communicate their ideas with other members, to stimulate a fluent debate during the next stages. At any point a representative may propose to move into the next stage;

2. Preparatory session:

This is the stage where the communiqué will be drafted by means of an ad hoc debate. During a preparatory session, no votes on the draft communiqué as a whole are allowed;

3. Formal session:

This session starts with a roll call, or with in another way determining whether all representatives are present. After this, the drafted communiqué will be discussed clause by clause. Members will be allowed to submit their reservations during this stage, and the Council will after that vote on the final communiqué as a whole.

There are three different times during which the Council has to vote:

1. Voting on the communiqué:

This was explained in more detail before. Yet it is important to always keep in mind that a vote against means the immediate failure of the whole communiqué, and therefore should be seriously reflected. Furthermore, as also stated before, abstentions are not allowed;



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2. Voting on amendments:

Every member has one vote during the voting on an amendment. This vote can be either in favor or against, which means no abstentions are allowed. Votes against should be taken seriously, as they could bar the passing of the entire document in the end;

3. Voting on procedural matters:

This is the only case in which France is allowed to vote. Abstentions are out of order on procedural matters, and a 2/3 majority is required to pass a motion, such as a motion to move the previous question, or any other procedural motion.

During debates, the Council is allowed to invite the ambassadors of non-council members to the Council for questioning or joining the debate on the matter. These invitees however, are not allowed to vote.