MEETING OF MINISTERS

Position of Contracting Parties
whose Ministers are Unable to Attend

Note by the Chairman

I have been thinking over the exchange of views which took place on this subject at the recent meeting of heads of delegations. There appear to me to be two considerations which emerge from this discussion which are to some extent contradictory. First there was a general consensus that nothing should be done by way of procedure which would in any way impair the character of the meeting as a meeting of ministers. On the other hand, contracting parties which for unavoidable reasons are not in a position to be represented by ministers should not be de-barred from putting forward views on behalf of their ministers, and from participation in the formulation of any agreed conclusions.

Whilst it is difficult to reconcile these two exigencies, I would suggest for consideration a procedure along the following lines:

A minister prevented from attending the meeting should be free to designate an alternate to speak on his behalf on the clear understanding that this alternate would in fact be expressing the views of the minister and engaging his responsibility. Such statements should be made at the close of the discussion of any point by ministers, on the invitation of their Chairman. If during the discussions or in the course of drawing up agreed conclusions the attending ministers desired to secure the views or assent of their absent colleague, the designated alternate would take the necessary steps to communicate with his minister so that the responsibility of the minister concerned would be engaged in any decision or recommendations concurred in by the ministers generally.

It is hoped that all ministers who are present will be able to stay throughout the meeting, but again if one or more ministers find it necessary to leave before the end of the meeting, a similar procedure should be followed, i.e. the departing minister should designate an alternate to act on his behalf in the manner suggested with respect to ministers who are not able to attend the meeting in person.