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23rd August, 2000

NOS/2(2000)102

Dear Mr. Watson,

Thank you for your invitation to address the Committee on Citizens' Freedom & Rights' working seminar in September. I am responding on behalf of Mr. Krug the Director of NATO's Office of Security.

You are no doubt aware that NATO and the Council Secretariat of the EU signed an interim Security Agreement, by means of an exchange of letters by both Secretaries General, at the end of July. The permanent longer-term objective is for NATO and the EU Council to conclude and sign a Security Agreement. In addition, the Commission has now made representation to NATO to partake in a similar process.

While we would be delighted to respond positively to your invitation, for a number of reasons, a presentation by NATO in September would be premature and somewhat inappropriate. Concluding Security Agreements to access NATO information, both classified and non-classified, with multifaceted organisations such as the EU is a complex and protracted affair. EU legal reciprocity notwithstanding, accessing NATO classified information is dependent upon legal imperatives, both internally in NATO and amongst the NATO nations. An organisation or non NATO country has to have a security infrastructure in place which satisfies NATO's security requirements. Dependent upon the level of access required the non-NATO party becomes the subject of regular inspections and a formal NATO certification process. These processes differ in every case. On the NATO side they can only be ratified with the agreement of all NATO member nations as laid out in individual Security Agreements which will have been hammered out by the relevant parties. These binding Agreements are never standard.

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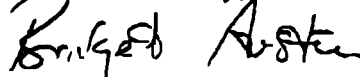
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For the reasons stated above, therefore, we must on this occasion decline your invitation to appear at the seminar but thank you for the interest you have shown in NATO's release policies.

Yours sincerely,



Bridget Austin

Acting Director, NATO Office of Security

European Parliament, Secretariat General
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2929 Luxembourg

For attention: Mr. Graham Watson

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-2-