

Geneva, November 14th, 1932.

LEAGUE OF NATIONS**CONFERENCE FOR THE REDUCTION AND
LIMITATION OF ARMAMENTS****MEMORANDUM BY THE FRENCH DELEGATION**

In putting forward the proposals contained in the present memorandum, the French delegation lays no claim to direct the work of the Conference into entirely new channels. Having endeavoured to interpret the lesson to be drawn from the discussions which have been pursued at Geneva for the last eight months and adhering to the resolutions already adopted, it hopes that a large number of delegations will recognise the expression of their own views in the proposals which it is putting forward, and that the Conference, after studying this text, will find therein a system which, combined with previous proposals and particularly with those of President Hoover, will enable it to bring its task rapidly to a successful conclusion.

From the debates which have been going on since February 2nd, 1932, certain lessons may be drawn.

It is now realised that "the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety and the enforcement by common action of international obligations" cannot be hoped for unless account is taken, as provided in Article 8 of the Covenant, of the geographical situation and special conditions of each State and even of each continent.

It is also realised that the possibility of a reduction of armaments is closely bound up in the minds of Governments with the conditions of security which exist or which may be created. At every stage of the debates, this notion of security, conceived not only for the advantage of one or several countries, but in the interests of all, has re-appeared. Thus the problem before us has revealed itself to be political as much as technical; in the sphere of disarmament and in the sphere of security progress must be made on parallel lines.

With this conclusion is connected another, which on the occasion of the discussions aroused by President Hoover's proposals met with unanimous approval—namely, that the task which lies before the Conference consists in increasing the comparative power of the defence through decreases in the power of the attack. With this end in view, reductions of effectives and quantitative and qualitative reductions of material have been contemplated. Considered from the aspect of material alone, there appeared to be a danger that the problem would prove insoluble; then, when effectives came to be considered, the difficulty arose of comparing different types of military organisation, each of which has its own special requirements and uses. The French delegation is convinced that the Conference, if it is to succeed, must not hesitate to examine the problem as a whole. It is much less important to enquire whether a particular type of material can facilitate aggression than to determine the form of military organisation which in a given area and in given political conditions would make a policy of aggression more difficult. Once this has been determined, the different armies of the area considered will by degrees have to be brought into line with this type.

By this method, and by this method alone, can a solution be found for a problem which has recently arisen in an acute form before the Conference.

While the French Government has objected to the conditions in which the claim for equality of rights has been put forward, while it does not recognise the force of the legal arguments on which this claim is based, and while it persists in the belief that any solution involving re-armament would be unacceptable as being contrary to the very purpose of the Conference, it has never denied that the problem was among the political problems brought up before the Conference, as was stated by the French Prime Minister on July 22nd, 1932, in the General Commission. The French delegation has every confidence that its proposals would permit of an equitable solution of this problem in the interests of general peace by the progressive equalisation of the



military status of the various countries and by an equal participation in the burdens and advantages of the organisation of common action, all question of re-armament being ruled out.

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Such being the complexity and multiplicity of the questions which are before the Conference, the French Government considers that it would be vain to endeavour to solve them all here and now by means of a plan of universal application. It therefore proposes that—subject to the adoption of a General Convention defining for all the Powers their obligations as regards limitation, reduction and supervision of land, sea and air armaments—provision should be made for an organisation for Europe capable of solving the problem of the reduction of armaments in that continent both in its political and in its technical aspects. The arrangements to be concluded will fix the reciprocal measures, whether more extensive or more definite, regarding limitation, reduction and supervision, which the States participating in this organisation will accept as a counterpart for mutual obligations in the matter of security and in relation with the conditions peculiar to Europe and to each one of them.

The French Government hopes that this European system will appear, to the Powers which will not belong to it, to be of sufficiently great general importance, from the point of view of the consolidation of peace, for them to render its application possible by agreeing, for their part, to give full effect to the guarantees arising out of the pacts by which they are already bound: the Pact of Paris or the Covenant of the League of Nations. Without this acceptance the plan would be impracticable.

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Accordingly, the French delegation has the honour to submit to the General Conference for the Limitation and Reduction of Armaments the following proposals which form an indivisible whole.

PROPOSALS.

Chapter I.

All the Powers taking part in the work of the Conference shall be called upon to establish in an effective manner the following principles, which are generally recognised to be a necessary consequence of the Pact for the Renunciation of War:

(a) Any war undertaken in breach of the Paris Pact is a matter of interest to all the Powers and shall be regarded as a breach of the obligations assumed towards each one of them;

(b) In the event of a breach or threat of breach of the Paris Pact, the said Powers shall concert together as promptly as possible with a view to appealing to public opinion and agreeing upon the steps to be taken;

(c) In application of the Pact of Paris outlawing war, any breach of that Pact shall involve the prohibition of direct or indirect economic or financial relations with the aggressor country. The Powers shall undertake to adopt the necessary measures to make that prohibition immediately effective;

(d) The said Powers shall declare their determination not to recognise any *de facto* situation brought about in consequence of the violation of an international undertaking.

Chapter II.

The application of the principles laid down in the previous chapter will make it possible to give full effect to the obligations devolving upon the Members of the League of Nations under the Covenant and under the treaties they have concluded in conformity with the principles of the Covenant: the General Convention on Means of Preventing War, the Convention for Financial Assistance.

France considers the effective and loyal application of Article 16 of the Covenant as an essential element of the plan she has worked out.

Chapter III.

The special organisation for Europe, which has already received a first realisation in the Locarno Treaties—which it must be understood must not be affected by any of the provisions of the present plan—will involve *political* arrangements and *military* arrangements. This organisation entails

Genève, le 17 novembre 1932.

SOCIETE DES NATIONS

CONFERENCE POUR LA REDUCTION ET LA LIMITATION DES ARMEMENTS.

ERRATUM

au

MEMORANDUM DE LA DELEGATION FRANÇAISE
(Conf.D/146).

- 1 - IMMEDIATEMENT APRES LE TITRE "Memorandum de la Délégation française", ajouter:
PLAN D'ORGANISATION DE LA PAIX.
- 2 - PAGE 1, 4ème LIGNE A PARTIR DU BAS DE LA PAGE, avant les mots "dès le 22 juillet", mettre un point virgule, au lieu d'une virgule.
- 3 - PAGE 3, LA PREMIERE PHRASE commençant par "Cette organisation, etc." doit être un NOUVEL ALINEA.
- 4 - PAGE 5, AVANT-DERNIER ALINEA, 3ème LIGNE, remplacer la phrase suivant les mots "emprunter sa doctrine." par le texte ci-après:

Comme l'a fortement observé Sir John Simon devant la Chambre des Communes, le 10 novembre courant, ce plan ne peut être réalisé que par échelons, "chacun de ces échelons étant justifié et tout naturellement amené par l'expérience que l'on aura fait des précédents". C'est dire que, etc....."

LEAGUE OF NATIONS

CONFERENCE FOR THE REDUCTION AND LIMITATION OF ARMAMENTS.

ERRATUM

to the

MEMORANDUM OF THE FRENCH DELEGATION
(Conf.D/146).

- 1 - IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE TITLE "Memorandum of the French delegation", add:
PLAN FOR THE ORGANISATION OF PEACE.
- 2 - PAGE 2, LAST LINE, the sentence beginning "The organisation, etc." should be a NEW PARAGRAPH.
- 3 - PAGE 5, LAST BUT ONE PARAGRAPH, 4th LINE, instead of the sentence following the words "declared its doctrine to be derived", read the following text:

As Sir John Simon emphatically observed in the House of Commons on November the 10th, such a plan can only be carried out by stages, "each subsequent step being justified and prepared for by the proved consequences of what has gone before". This means that etc....."

in the first place their acceptance by a sufficient number of Powers, regard being had to their importance and geographical position, in order that the security of each of them should be ensured in all circumstances.

Section A.

The fundamental object of the *political* arrangements will be to define the conditions in which each of the States forming part of the European organisation will be entitled to the co-operation of the other contracting States.

1. These arrangements will establish the right to assistance when a territory under the authority of one of the signatory Powers is attacked or invaded by foreign forces. An aggression as thus defined cannot be taken to include certain cases such as the existence of an agreement to the contrary, the case of self-defence (*i.e.*, the repulsing of armed forces which have entered by violence the territory of the State which is defending itself), and action undertaken in execution of Article 16 of the Covenant of the League of Nations or specially authorised for any other reason by the Council or Assembly of the League.

2. The object of the assistance will be to put an end to the aggression, and to create a *de facto* situation which will allow of a fair settlement of the consequences of the aggression.

3. The Council of the League of Nations will decide that assistance shall be given on simply ascertaining that an attack or invasion has taken place.

In order to facilitate any steps that may be necessary to ascertain the facts, there shall be established in each of the signatory States a commission consisting of diplomatic agents and military, naval and air attachés accredited to the Government of that State, the members of this commission being appointed by the Council of the League of Nations. Any State which believes itself to be threatened or alleges that it has been attacked may demand that the necessary measures be taken to establish the facts.

4. The peaceful settlement of disputes between States which have signed the European agreement will be ensured by the compulsory accession of those States to the General Act of Arbitration.

Should one of the signatories refuse to conform to the methods for the peaceful settlement of disputes, or to execute an arbitral award or judicial decision, or to take necessary action when the Council of the League has established that there has been a breach of an international undertaking, the other party will submit the matter to the Council, which will decide what steps are to be taken. The contracting Powers will lend assistance in carrying the decision into effect.

5. In the cases considered above, the Council's decisions will be taken by a majority vote.

6. To enable first-aid to be given without delay to any State entitled to the assistance provided for in paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 above, the contracting Powers will agree to the specialisation of portions of their military forces under the conditions laid down in Section B below.

Section B.

Corresponding to the political arrangements in Section A above, there will be *military* arrangements aiming, on the basis of an equality of defensive status, at:

(1) Reducing the offensive character of the national forces in accordance with the principle laid down in the American proposal of June 22nd last;

(2) Specialising certain elements with a view to the most urgent operations involved in the *common action* provided for in paragraph 1 of Article 8 and paragraph 2 of Article 16 of the Covenant of the League of Nations.

I.

(a) The land forces assigned for the defence of the home frontiers of the States of *continental* Europe will be reduced to a *uniform general type* — that of a national short-service army with limited effectives — not adapted to a sudden offensive.

For this purpose, under the conditions defined in paragraphs (b), (c) and (d) below, as and when those conditions are fulfilled, the said forces will be organised on the following bases:

Their effectives and period of training shall be fixed so as to secure their defensive character, in conformity with the provisions of Article 8 of the Covenant of the League of Nations — that is, in such a way as to ensure the national security of each State, taking account of its geographical situation and circumstances. In particular, the numerical limitation of the short-service effectives will be adapted to the inequalities and variations of the resources of recruitment of the various signatory Powers; the same will apply to the period of training, which will have to include, in a form to be determined, the time spent in pre-regimental training or in military training received, for example, in political organisations.

(b) Apart from the specialised elements for common action referred to in paragraph II, no contracting party will be able to retain in the forces assigned for the defence of its home territory units consisting of professional effectives or soldiers serving longer than the period fixed for its national army.

(c) The professional or long-service effectives (instructors, specialists and cadres) of the national armies referred to in paragraph (a) will be limited on common bases and in relation to the effectives of those armies.

(d) The effectives of home police forces of a military character, more especially those living in barracks, will be limited on a basis of calculation common to all signatory States. Any excess over the figure resulting from these calculations must be set off by an equivalent reduction in the effectives defined in paragraph (c).

(e) There shall be prohibited, for the national armies of the contracting Powers, at least all powerful mobile material, especially such as would facilitate an attack on permanent fortifications (powerful artillery and powerful tanks). It is quite obvious that the General Convention will have to be established in conformity with these restrictions of material and with the provisions which follow.

II.

(a) Each of the contracting Powers will place permanently at the disposal of the League of Nations, as a contingent for joint action, a small number of *specialised units* consisting of troops serving a relatively long term and provided with the powerful materials prohibited for the national armies.

In order to be able, at the first call from the League of Nations, and according to plans drawn up by a delegation of the League's Permanent Advisory Commission, to provide the speedy aid to which any State party to the European arrangements would be entitled in the conditions contemplated in Section A above, these specialised contingents will be kept constantly ready for action, and will be formed on similar lines. The Convention will stipulate the quota to be contributed by each State for such purpose.

(b) Apart from the normal armament of the contingents contemplated above, any mobile land material which is prohibited for the national armies contemplated in Section I will be stored in each of the contracting States under international supervision. These stocks will, if necessary, be placed at the disposal of the parties in aid of which collective action is taken.

(c) Any contracting party engaged in legitimate self-defence, as defined in the political arrangements in Section A above, will regain the free use of the contingent maintained by it and of the stocks of materials in its territory.

III.

In all the contracting Powers, *war materials*, both those of the national defensive armies and those of the contingents for common action, will gradually be *made uniform, their manufacture being internationally supervised and organised*.

IV.

There will be organised among the contracting Powers a *regular and permanent supervision* of the execution of their obligations in regard to their armaments. This supervision will involve an investigation at least once a year.

V.

The general organisation—to be established within a period to be fixed—being defined on the foregoing bases, the *successive stages of its establishment* will be settled, all arrangements being made for any of the parties concerned to be given at any time the necessary safeguards in regard to effectives and the value of the forces to be compared, and to ensure that there is no increase of forces or expenditure on armaments for any State, apart from any exceptions duly justified and accepted by the Conference.

Chapter IV.

Naval and oversea forces are evidently not affected directly by a continental system of the kind set out above.

They stand primarily in relation, on the one hand, to the special needs for the protection of the territories for which certain Powers are responsible overseas, as well as for the defence of the coasts of the home country or colonies and of the communications by sea, and on the other hand to the naval or military forces of such Powers as may not be parties to the arrangements proposed in Chapter III.

That will not make it any less necessary to maintain the interdependence of the general system of military reductions adopted on the European continent and of the limitation of sea and oversea armaments.

Oversea forces should strictly, therefore, be calculated and specialised for the particular tasks incumbent upon them; the resulting limitations shall be fixed by the General Convention.

As regards *naval forces*, the solutions to be contemplated, whether in connection with security or in connection with the limitation and reduction of armaments, necessarily find a place within a *general* framework applying equally to all maritime Powers. But the conclusion at the Washington Conference of the Pacific Agreement which made possible the signature of the Naval Treaty of 1922 has clearly shown the advantage of *regional* understandings of a political character for the purpose of facilitating the reduction of fighting fleets. If such was the effect of an agreement whose scope was limited to certain restrictions on the use of naval bases and a simple undertaking on the part of the signatories to consult one another, it is reasonable to suppose that very much larger reductions of tonnage would be facilitated by agreements organising, with all the necessary stipulations of detail, the co-operation of fleets in cases analogous to those contemplated in Section A of Chapter III. This applies in particular to the case of the conclusion of a Mediterranean Pact between the naval Powers concerned.

However this may be, it is in accordance with the spirit of the Hoover proposals that, in the case of naval armaments as in that of land armaments, the principal reductions should be effected in those categories of vessels which have been recognised as the most offensive by means of the *qualitative* reduction of the characteristics at present fixed for certain types of war vessels.

As regards *quantitative* reductions, since, under the terms of the Hoover proposal, "the naval armaments have grown up in mutual relation to one another", it will be desirable to look for "real and positive" reductions of tonnage, while leaving this relativity as it stands.

Consequently, subject to a special system applicable to fleets whose aggregate tonnage does not exceed 100,000 tons, the uniform percentage of reduction to be accepted should apply to the aggregate tonnages declared in 1931 by the different naval Powers in reply to the questionnaire of the Council of the League as to the position of their armaments.

It is unnecessary, from the standpoint of armaments, to distinguish, in the case of naval forces, between general and specialised forces. But, for the purpose of supplementing at sea the land action provided for in Chapter III, Section B, II, every contracting Power possessing naval forces shall, when called upon by the League of Nations, supply the emergency assistance to which any State which is a victim of aggression would be entitled under the conditions laid down in Chapter III, Section A. Such assistance shall include a certain proportion of vessels of every category, that proportion being stipulated beforehand in the Convention.

Chapter V.

It is clear that, like the naval forces, the *air forces* cannot be directly affected by a continental system like that outlined in Chapter III. Nevertheless, in the matter of reduction of *air armaments* it would now appear possible to take a most important step forward within the framework of the *General Convention*, in view of the fact that the Conference, acting on the proposals put before it for qualitative disarmament (to which were added the proposals of President Hoover), provided in its resolution of July 23rd last for the total prohibition of bombardment from the air, subject to special guarantees of security in connection with non-military aviation.

It will be all to the good, however, if these results are defined, when the time comes, in a *regional* system, which can be made even more effective in the case of the air, if all the great air Powers of Europe—continental and non-continental—agree to participate.

Consequently, in addition to the provisions already proposed in the draft Convention of the Preparatory Commission, the French delegation proposes the following body of measures:

(1) All bombardment from the air shall be prohibited and bombing aircraft shall be abolished under the conditions for which the resolution of July 23rd provides;

(2) The necessary provisions for this purpose shall be settled in principle by the General Convention; but these will be supplemented by a special arrangement with regard to the air, applicable to Europe alone, regarding points which do not form part of the general agreement—in particular, concerning the establishment of a "European Air Transport Union", which will entrust the management and supervision in Europe of public air-transport to an international body, and will ensure the application of a system of safeguards against the use of civil aircraft for military purposes;

(3) The importance of the obligations assumed in connection with the air is so great, and the consequences of their violation would be so serious, that it appears essential to give the League of Nations, at any rate in Europe, a powerful means of action capable of immediate intervention as necessity arises to guarantee the execution of the obligations in question. Specialised air units, as in the case of the land army, possessing more powerful machines and more powerful equipment than the ordinary air units, will be able to place adequate means of action at the disposal of the League.

Going still further in this category of ideas, certain delegations, including the French delegation, have already suggested the establishment of an *organically international air force* to be set up and maintained permanently by the League of Nations. The provision of material for the force will be made easier by the abolition of bombing aircraft in the different national air forces, these aircraft being handed over to the League in accordance with executory regulations to be drawn up. Staff will be provided by direct recruiting from volunteers of different nationalities in accordance with a quota system to be laid down.

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In conclusion, be it noted afresh that the several parts of this plan constitute one indivisible whole. Examination has shown it to be based integrally on the application of the Pact of Paris and of the Covenant of the League of Nations, from which the French Government has declared its doctrine to be derived. This plan can only be carried out by stages, each of these stages being justified and naturally introduced by the experience gained in the previous ones. This means that its success will depend on the progress of the confidence which must grow up between peoples and on the loyalty with which it is carried out. It presupposes the concentration of efforts and the determination to overcome the inevitable difficulties and not to sacrifice the realities of positive action to facile negations or criticisms.

France has desired to perform this duty, which is an imperative one for every country.

