

Geneva, October 24th, 1932.

LEAGUE OF NATIONS

**Conference for the Reduction and Limitation  
of Armaments**

**REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE BUREAU ON THE  
QUESTION OF AIR FORCES**

In compliance with the Decision taken on September 26th, 1932.

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With reference to air forces, the resolution adopted by the General Commission on July 23rd contemplates two separate measures :

- (1) The absolute prohibition of air attack against the civilian population ;
- (2) The abolition, as between the contracting parties, of all bombardment from the air, subject to agreement with regard to measures to be adopted for the purpose of rendering effective the observance of this rule.

According to the resolution, these measures should include the following :

- (a) There shall be effected a limitation by number and a restriction by characteristics of military aircraft ;
- (b) Civil aircraft shall be submitted to regulation and full publicity. Further, civil aircraft not conforming to the specified limitations shall be subjected to an international regime (except for certain regions where such a regime is not suitable) such as to prevent effectively the misuse of such civil aircraft.

As the undertaking regarding the absolute prohibition of air attack against the civilian population was entered into on July 23rd last, it should not be difficult to draft a text establishing that prohibition for insertion in the future Disarmament Convention. The question does not in itself give rise to any difficulties. In point of fact, the efficacy of the rule that would be laid down in the text on the subject would be increased if the second rule, regarding the abolition of all bombardment from the air, were accepted without any invalidating reservations.

It is doubtless for this reason that the Bureau has thought it desirable to link the two questions together when it would have been quite easy to refer rule No. 1—namely, the absolute prohibition of air attack against the civilian population—to a drafting committee.

I venture to think that the prohibition of air attack against the civilian population would remain purely theoretical if it were not accompanied either by the limitation of air bombardment to military objectives, or by the abolition of all bombardment from the air. Indeed, I consider that the second question should be examined first, and if, as we all hope, it is satisfactorily settled, that settlement will give a practical meaning, content and effect to rule No. 1, which prohibits air attack against the civilian population.

PROHIBITION OF BOMBARDMENT FROM THE AIR.

According to the resolution of July 23rd, the measures to be adopted for the purpose of rendering effective the observance of this rule may be classified as follows :

- (a) Quantitative limitation of air forces ;
- (b) Qualitative limitation of air forces through restrictions on the characteristics of military aircraft ;
- (c) Regulation and full publicity of civil aircraft ;
- (d) Adoption of an international regime for certain civil aircraft not conforming to the specified limitations.



Without going into these four points in detail, I think it may be well, before making any proposals, to survey what has so far been done by the Preparatory Commission and by the Air Commission of the Conference.

The method of quantitative limitation has not yet been studied by the technical organs of the Conference. It was discussed at length by the Preparatory Commission, and Articles 25, 26 and 27 of the draft Convention of 1930 were the outcome of that discussion.

The method of qualitative limitation was thoroughly examined by the Air Commission in pursuance of the General Commission's resolution of April 22nd, regarding the determination of offensive weapons.

The Air Commission's report on that subject is so well known that I need not attempt to summarise it here. No agreement was reached on the determination of offensive weapons ; but detailed proposals deserving the closest attention have been made, and may be taken as a basis for discussion.

With regard to civil aviation, the Preparatory Commission contemplated the measures embodied in Articles 28 and 36 of the draft Convention of 1930.

A similar but more far-reaching enquiry was instituted by the Sub-Committee of the Air Commission in consequence of the General Commission's resolution of March 17th. The Sub-Committee prepared a scheme of regulations for civil aviation which contemplates a series of undertakings relating to material, personnel, subsidies and publicity.

The Sub-Committee reported (document Conf.D./C.A.70)(1) on the position of its work at the close of the first phase of the Conference. The Sub-Committee's programme of work provided for a second part relating to supervision, and a third part dealing with the international regime to which certain aircraft should be subjected.

Having been instructed by the Bureau at its meeting on September 26th to draw up a report on the best method to be followed in regard to questions (a) 1 and (b) 1, I have the honour to submit to you the present report, the conclusions of which are as follows :

As regards point (a) 1, no preliminary work is needed ; all that is required is to await the elucidation of point (b) 1. The two points can then be referred to a drafting committee.

As regards point (b) 1, the Bureau might instruct an Air Committee, consisting of delegates of those countries represented on the Bureau who desire to participate, to draw up its programme of work and to examine, on the basis of the resolution of July 23rd, the measures to be adopted to make effective the observance of the prohibition of bombardment from the air. These measures are as follows :

#### I. *Civil aviation :*

The Committee shall make proposals concerning the system of regulation and the international regime to be adopted ; and

#### II. *Military aviation :*

The Committee shall :

- (1) Define the limits to be fixed for the restriction on the characteristics of aircraft ;
- (2) Give its opinion as to whether quantitative limitation is to be applied according to the principles contemplated by the draft Convention of 1930, or whether it is to be extended to materials in stock ;
- (3) Determine the extent of quantitative limitation.

The agenda of the Committee to be set up, given hereunder by way of indication, might therefore be as follows :

- I. General regulation and publicity for civil aviation and an international regime to be applied to certain aircraft to permit of the total abolition of aerial bombardment.
- II. Restriction on the characteristics of military aircraft for the same purpose.
- III. Quantitative limitation of air forces.
- IV. If necessary, further measures to be adopted in order to render effective the total abolition of aerial bombardment.

As regards point III, the Committee might deem it expedient to instruct its Rapporteur to proceed, as soon as the progress of the work entrusted to him permits, to the negotiations necessary to enable him to submit his conclusions to the Committee, so that the latter in its turn may incorporate them in its report to the Bureau, after making any amendments which it may think necessary.

It will be for the Bureau to decide whether the report of the Air Committee has gone into the questions submitted to it sufficiently for them to be submitted to a Committee for drafting purposes. It is possible, however, that the Bureau may think it well to refer the question back to the Committee to clear up certain points of principle or detail.

Moreover, whatever decisions the Bureau may think fit to take in this matter, and whatever studies it desires to undertake to give effect to the resolution of July 23rd, it must be understood that final decisions may only be taken subsequently with the co-operation of all the countries principally concerned with aviation.

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