Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference.

Report of the Third Committee to the Assembly.

Rapporteur: H.E. M. Paul-Boncour (France).

After taking note of the negotiations at that time in progress with a view to the conclusion of arbitration conventions and of treaties of mutual security, and anticipating the successful conclusion of these negotiations, the Assembly, at its Sixth Ordinary Session, decided that it could ask the Council to proceed immediately to preparatory studies for the organisation of a conference on the reduction and limitation of armaments.

In taking this step on the proposal of its Third Committee, it fully realised that these studies would necessarily take a considerable time in view of the wide scope and the complicated nature of a problem which had hitherto never been approached.

It hoped that in this way, when political conditions permitted — the preparatory studies having already been carried out — a conference for the reduction and limitation of armaments could usefully be convened.

In the Third Committee's opinion, this step was a wise one and these hopes will not prove vain. After hearing the statement made by M. Loudon, the Chairman of the Preparatory Commission to which the Council entrusted the investigations called for by the Sixth Ordinary Session of the Assembly, on the state of this Commission's work and also of that of its technical Sub-Commissions, and having regard also to the fact that the situation has become more favourable by the ratification of the Locarno Agreements and Germany's admission to the League of Nations, the Third Committee recognised that a conference on the limitation of armaments can and should be convened.

Differences of opinion, or, more exactly, apprehensions, have been manifested as to when the technical preparations will be complete and consequently as to when the Preparatory Commission can draw up the programme of the Conference and when the Conference itself can be convened.

Nevertheless, the work has been pursued with such energy and has reached such a stage of development that the Third Committee believes that it will be possible to draw up the programme of the Conference at the beginning of next year, and accordingly proposes that the Assembly should congratulate those who have taken part in this work.

It will then be for the Council to fix the date of convening the Conference. In this connection it should be pointed out that, while great progress has been made with regard to security, thanks to the Locarno Agreements, this progress only affects one part of the continent of Europe.

For this reason it appeared necessary to state that the limitation and reduction of armaments should "correspond to existing conditions in regard to regional and general security". Furthermore, there can be no question of solving the problem of disarmament at the first attempt. As security increases, disarmament will increase. The Disarmament Conference will therefore only be the first of a series and, even apart from the importance of the reductions and limitations which it may bring about, it must in any case have the immense advantage of transforming into an international contract the degree of armament of the different States, and of thus putting a stop for a definite period to any possibility of competition in armaments.

In these circumstances there can be no objection in principle to contemplating the possibility of holding a conference before the Eighth Ordinary Session of the Assembly. Several members of the Third Committee, however, have emphasised the grave disappointment which would be felt by public opinion if, after it had been announced for a definite date, it proved impossible to hold the Conference at the date in question. The Third Committee duly weighed this drawback and made allowance for it, to the extent of recommending that the Conference should be held before the Eighth Ordinary Session of the Assembly, "unless material difficulties render this impossible," and it emphasises the considerable importance of surmounting such difficulties and accelerating the work of the technical Commissions, which must first be completed before the Preparatory Commission can usefully meet.
Committee has therefore decided to propose to the Assembly the adoption of a resolution asking the Council to convene a first conference before the Eighth Ordinary Session of the Assembly, unless material difficulties should render this impossible, in order to agree upon the first stage of the work of disarmament.

Draft Resolution

"The Assembly takes note of the report submitted to it by the Secretariat and the very full information furnished to the Third Committee by the President of the Preparatory Commission on the work of that Commission, its technical Sub-Commissions A and B, and the Joint Commission.

"It expresses its complete satisfaction with the work performed and thanks those who have contributed to it.

"Being desirous that the investigations, in regard to which the Assembly itself took the initiative in its resolution of September 25th, 1925, should be brought to a successful conclusion as soon as possible, it requests the Council to call upon the Preparatory Commission to take steps to hasten the completion of the technical work and thus be able to draw up, at the beginning of next year, the programme for a Conference on the limitation and reduction of armaments corresponding to existing conditions in regard to regional and general security, and it asks the Council to convene this conference before the Eighth Ordinary Session of the Assembly unless material difficulties render this impossible."