LEAGUE OF NATIONS

CONFERENCE FOR THE REDUCTION AND LIMITATION
OF ARMAMENTS

Proposal of the French Delegation

The Government of the Republic, conscious of the gravity of the problem to be solved, is convinced that, in accordance with previous work of the League of Nations, the Conference should deal with this problem as a part of general policy.

This is all the more important since it meets at a time of economic and moral tension, at a time of general disturbance and uneasiness, when events emphasise the absolute necessity of a better organisation in a tormented world.

The Government of the Republic is anxious to honour the promise contained in its memorandum of July 15th, 1931, and to reply to the repeated appeals made by the League of Nations, notably in the resolution of the Assembly of 1927. It intends thus to fulfil a double duty.

Further, it presents herewith proposals for placing civil aviation and bombing aircraft, and also certain material of land and naval forces, at the disposal of the League of Nations; for the creation of a preventive and punitive international force; for the political conditions upon which such measures depend; and, lastly, for new rules providing for the protection of civil population.

I. PROPOSALS TO PLACE CIVIL AVIATION AND BOMBING AIRCRAFT AT THE DISPOSAL OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

The Government of the Republic proposes, in the first place, to the Conference a series of measures dealing with the newest arm of war, now increasing immoderately in size and technique with consequent disorganisation of prices and international competition—this war arm whose character is the most specifically offensive and the most threatening to civilians.

Bombing machines capable of carrying great loads and having a wide radius of action which enables them to conduct operations far within the territory of belligerent countries offer the aggressor a particularly cruel weapon for use against non-combatants. It is to such machines that the following provisions refer:

1. Internationalisation of Civil Air Transport under a Regime to be organised by the League.

This internationalisation, already studied by certain Governments for economic and financial reasons, would include:

(a) The undertaking by the Contracting parties not to permit their nationals to construct (with the exception of orders placed in accordance with the conditions fixed in paragraphs (b), (c) and (d) hereafter) or to employ machines capable of military use. The maximum unladen tonnage of authorised aircraft will be to this end and in accordance with the advice of their experts, limited by the Contracting parties to $x$ tons for aeroplanes, $x'$ for seaplanes and $x''$ cubic metres for dirigibles.

(b) The creation of an international civil air transport service entrusted to continental, inter-continental or inter-colonial organisations, to operate air transport under the auspices

Or, in the case of the accession of States non-members of the League of Nations, of which several have taken part in the work of the Preparatory Commission, at the disposal of the international authority which would be constituted to ensure their co-operation.
of the League of Nations, which alone will have the right to build and to use machines of
greater tonnage than that indicated in the preceding paragraph.

(c) The right to create lines between the home country and colonial territories presenting
particular interest for one or more of the Contracting parties, provided always that they
undertake to bear the costs, if requested to do so by the League of Nations, and that they
submit to the League for its approval the number, the type and the unladen tonnage of the
machines to be used.

(d) The fair distribution, according to their capacity, between the aviation industries
of the different countries, of orders for material for international civil aviation, in accordance
with conditions to be fixed in an annexed convention.

(e) The exclusive, permanent and inalienable right for the League of Nations to
requisition all machines for the International Civil Air Service.

(f) The guarantee of the Contracting Parties not to place an embargo on machines
belonging to the International Civil Air Service and not to sequestrate them, but to facilitate
the League’s right of requisition by all means in their power.

This internationalisation of civil aviation is the necessary condition of the proposals which
follow.

2. Limitation of Bombing Aircraft.

The problem to be solved has two aspects of equal importance.

On the one hand, it is necessary that, in order to carry out its preventive and, if need be, its
punitive action against war, the League of Nations should dispose of a superiority in air strength.

On the other hand, it would be inadmissible for a State suffering from an air bombardment,
in violation of the rules laid down in Chapter V below, not to retain the full use of all its air strength
in order to reply to this flagrant act of aggression.

In order to reconcile these two necessities, the Government of the Republic proposes:

(a) The contracting parties undertake not to retain, or not to build in the future for
their military air forces, machines having an unladen tonnage exceeding a limit to be fixed by
the contracting parties in consultation with their experts, at \( y \) tons for aeroplanes, \( y' \) tons
for seaplanes and \( y'' \) cubic metres for dirigibles.

Machines of tonnage above this limit will be set aside for the constitution of an inter-
national military air force. Consequently, they will be transferred by those contracting
parties who own them when the Convention comes into force, to the League of Nations which
will decide where they have to be stationed and will organise the command of the International
Air Force.

(b) In the military air forces of the different States, two categories must be distinguished:

(1) Machines which will be left, in all circumstances, at the disposal of the Military
Air Forces, and the unladen tonnage of which will be decided by the contracting parties
after consultation with their experts and will not exceed \( z \) tons for aeroplanes, \( z' \) tons
for seaplanes and \( z'' \) cubic metres for dirigibles;

(2) Machines the unladen tonnage of which comes within the limits \( y \) and \( z \) and
which will conform with the rules of paragraph (c) below.

(c) The inclusion of aeroplanes, the unladen tonnage of which comes between \( z \) and \( y \)
tons, in the Air Forces they are entitled to possess, is only authorised to those contracting
parties who undertake to place them at the disposal of the League in the eventuality of the
application of Article 16 of the Covenant and of common action by the League of Nations.
These machines will be permanently under the inspection of the League.

(d) Any contracting party suffering from an air bombardment in violation of Chapter V
below, on the sole condition that it notifies the League of Nations, will be entitled immediately
to use all its air forces including those machines earmarked to be at the disposal of the League
of Nations. The contracting party will also, \( ipso facto \), be freed from its own obligations
\( vis-à-vis \) the aggressor.

The above provisions, while ensuring to the League its superiority of air strength, result in
limiting bombing aircraft as regards number, power and use.

II. Proposals to place certain material of land and naval forces at the disposal
of the League of Nations.

The same problem arises in the case of certain land and naval material as arises in the case
of bombing aircraft. The French delegation offers a similar solution — namely:

(a) Only those Powers which undertake to place them at the disposal of the League
of Nations in the event of the application of Article 16 of the Covenant and of common action
by the League shall have the right to possess such materials;
(b) In the case of aggression contrary to the rules laid down in Chapter V of the present proposals, the said Powers, after notifying the League of Nations, will recover the full right to dispose of all such means of defence;

c) The material coming under the present section includes:

- Batteries of heavy long-range artillery;
- Capital ships carrying guns exceeding 8 inches or of a tonnage exceeding 10,000 (W.T.) tons;
- Submarines with a tonnage exceeding n tons.

III. CREATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL FORCE.

The object of the third French proposal is to set up on behalf of the League of Nations and apart from the measures provided in Chapters I and 2:

1. An international police force to prevent war;
2. A first contingent of punitive forces to repress war and to bring immediate assistance to any State victim of aggression.

(a) The police force will be permanently available with complete freedom of passage to occupy in times of emergency areas where a threat of war has arisen, and to assist the action of commissioners of the League of Nations on the spot, and also to contribute to all conservative measures within the scope of the Convention to improve the Means of Preventing War and of Article 11 of the League Covenant.

This police force will be made up of contingents furnished by each of the contracting parties in a proportion to be determined. France is prepared to contribute a mixed brigade, a light naval division and a mixed group of reconnaissance and fighter aircraft.

The League of Nations will arrange for the command of the international police force and will be entitled to inspect its component elements.

(b) The first contingent of punitive forces would, in conformity with the undertakings to be assumed by contracting parties, be made up of elements of strength varying according to the regions concerned.

These undertakings entered into by States towards the League of Nations would oblige them to come to the help of any State victim of aggression with forces of definite strength constantly available. The contracting parties would have the option of increasing this contribution on the recommendation of the Council of the League (Paragraph 2 of Article 6 of the Covenant) or, in the event of aggression, with a view to applying regional conventions of mutual assistance coming within the scope of the Covenant.

The undertakings of the various States would differ according to the place of the conflict—a conflict concerning another continent from that to which the State belongs; a conflict concerning the continent to which the State belongs; a conflict in which the aggressor has a common frontier with the contracting State.

France is prepared to undertake the following contributions:

In the case of a conflict outside Europe: a mixed brigade, a light naval division, a mixed group of aircraft, material for land warfare without personnel, and munitions;

For a conflict in Europe: a division of all arms, a naval division, a mixed group of aircraft, material for land warfare with personnel, and munitions;

For a conflict in Europe in which the aggressor has a common frontier with France, the contingents provided for in the preceding paragraph and, in addition, forces, the strength of which would be decided in each case in agreement with the League.

As far as material for land warfare is concerned, the contracting parties which possess tanks or similar armoured implements, as well as heavy field artillery, undertake to contribute from them to the forces which will be placed at the disposal of the League under the conditions mentioned above.

In these various eventualities the undertakings of each State would only become operative if the forces thus placed at any moment at the disposal of the League reached a minimum total to be determined, and if there were equitable proportion between the contributions of the principal States.

IV. PROTECTION OF CIVILIAN POPULATIONS.

In addition to the preceding provisions, the Government of the Republic proposes the adoption of the following rules which can be adopted unconditionally:

(a) The use by aeroplanes and by land or naval artillery of projectiles which are specifically incendiary or which contain poison gases or bacteria is forbidden, whatever the objective.

(b) Any bombardment either from the air or by artillery is forbidden at a distance of more than x kilometres from the front line in land warfare. The only exceptions admitted to this rule concern the bombardment of air bases used by belligerents or of the emplacements of long-range artillery.

(c) Along the coast air bombardment is forbidden behind a zone of a depth of x kilometres except on air bases and on batteries of artillery. In this zone of x kilometres air
bombardment is not permitted except under the conditions laid down by Convention IX of The Hague for naval artillery acting with or without preliminary warning according to the case mentioned in Article 2 of the said Convention.

(d) The use of naval artillery will continue to be governed by the provisions of Convention IX of The Hague.

(e) Any flagrant violation of one of the rules stated in the present chapter will be regarded as prima facie evidence that the State guilty thereof has resorted to war within the meaning of Article 16 of the Covenant of the League of Nations.

V. CONDITIONS FOR THE ORGANISATION OF PEACE.

The Government of the Republic is fully aware that the above proposals entail political measures, which alone permit and guarantee their successful operation.

It affirms once more that no substantial reduction of armaments can be brought about by empirical and technical means. Whoever desires the end—and the end is essential—must also desire the means. There must be a change of method; in future we must seek in common action that security which each nation has hitherto endeavoured to obtain from its own force alone.

This is the very spirit of the Covenant. We must give vitality to its stipulations, which, ever since we began to discuss their application, have been constantly interpreted along the line of least resistance.

The present Conference offers the best opportunity that has ever occurred to make a definite choice between a League of Nations possessing executive authority and a League of Nations paralysed by the uncompromising attitude of national sovereignty. France has made her choice. She suggests that the other nations should make theirs.

The measures without which the above proposals would be ineffective and even unthinkable include amongst others compulsory arbitration; definition of the aggressor; guarantees as to the rapidity of the decision of the authority controlling the international force; the bringing of the action of that authority into conformity with international law, which is still insufficiently precise, but the permanent and contractual elements of which result from international treaties and pacts; and the international control of the execution of all agreements concerning armaments.

These provisions, in regard to which the French delegation reserves the right to make concrete proposals are an integral part of the enquiries carried out by the League of Nations during the last twelve years. All the elements of the necessary solution are brought together.

Such a solution would be not only an important step towards a general and contractual limitation of armaments and towards their reduction, but also a great advance in the organisation of peace.

As the proposed organisation would have to be general, the execution of the undertakings which the various Powers would declare themselves ready to accept will be held in suspense until the ratification of the final Convention by all the contracting parties.

The Government of the Republic furnished in its Memorandum of July 15th, 1931, and in the Annexes to that Memorandum precise details of the modification of its armaments and the reductions which it has already brought about of its own accord, in execution of Article 8 of the League Covenant, since it came into force and since the conclusion of the Locarno Agreements.

These reductions, which the political conditions based on the existing order of things have rendered possible to France, are a pledge of her determination not only to fix them by treaty, but also, once co-operation has taken the place of isolation, to endeavour to achieve further reductions on the lines of the present proposals and of the fundamental guarantees to peace which these proposals would ensure.

Annex.

EXPLANATORY TABLE OF CHAPTER I OF THE ABOVE PROPOSALS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Military Aircraft</th>
<th>Tonnage</th>
<th>Civil Aircraft</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bombing machines capable of carrying great loads, set aside for the International Air Force; not allowed for national aircraft.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>International Air Transport Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National aircraft placed at the disposal of the League in the eventualiy of the application of Article 16 of the Covenant.</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military aircraft left, in all circumstances, at the disposal of the contracting parties.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Private Aircraft.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. — X, Y and Z to be determined by the Conference.