LEAGUE OF NATIONS

DOCUMENTS

of the

PREPARATORY COMMISSION

FOR THE DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

entrusted with the

PREPARATION FOR THE CONFERENCE

FOR THE REDUCTION

AND LIMITATION OF ARMAMENTS

SERIES IV

MINUTES

of the

Third Session of the Preparatory Commission

for the Disarmament Conference

Held at Geneva from March 21st to April 26th, 1927

GENEVA, 1927
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1. Opening of the Session.

The President. — The work of the third session of our Commission will doubtless be the heaviest, but at the same time it is more clearly defined than that of preceding meetings, as we now have detailed reports from our Sub-Commissions, and therefore we are able to approach our task with a full appreciation of its extent. We must bear in mind that public opinion is watching us. We must achieve positive results, and these results must be simple and comprehensive. If there are any among us — and I refuse to believe that that could be the case — who do not desire to achieve results, they must say so definitely, and must bear the heavy responsibility of having said so, before the world. The time has come for each of us to speak clearly and frankly, whilst at the same time respecting the point of view of others. Do not let us cloud the issue by adopting vague formulae. Let us rather prepare public opinion not to expect marvels from the first stage of our work towards the reduction of armaments. I lay particular stress upon this word "reduction", because that is the word which is used in Article 8 of the Covenant. On the other hand, I set aside the word "disarmament", which has a false ring, as in the present state of affairs it must be regarded as difficult of achievement. If it is true that a war of aggression is a crime which is a dishonour to humanity, it is also undeniable that a country which has been attacked has a sacred duty to defend itself. Until such time as real, moral disarmament has been achieved — and this alone can bring about universal peace, towards which the whole work of the League is directed — material disarmament can only take place gradually. But the great step in this direction, the work which we have undertaken and to which the Conference will devote its efforts, is to apply the brake to the disastrous competition of armaments which, as we have already seen, ruins countries, engenders mutual distrust and brings about wars which, finally, are as disastrous to the victors as they are to the vanquished.

We must to-day endeavour fully to realise the scope of our work and the procedure which will have to be followed in order to carry it through to a successful conclusion. Obviously, there can be no question of going in detail through all the various points of the bulky reports of our Sub-Commissions with the idea of laying before the Council a general report in addition to the programme which we have to draw up for the great Conference.
This method of procedure would be a mistake and would involve a considerable loss of time. The reports of Sub-Committees A and B, and of the technical Committees which assisted them, are of inestimable value as representing the opinion of first-class technical experts on every point of detail, and, furthermore, because they have thrown into prominence the points upon which there is disagreement, without a knowledge of which no agreement would be possible. It is obvious that, if each of the delegations refused to make any concession, our work would be futile. We must approach the problem of the reduction and limitation of armaments in a spirit of co-operation, of conciliation, and I may even say in a spirit of compromise. Let us avoid giving the impression that any particular Power, no matter which, is endeavouring to impose its own will. The work of our Commission is not to find the basis of a purely theoretical understanding; it is to reach some concrete results, to establish agreements with regard to principles, to lay the foundations of the Convention, and even, if possible, to draft the text of a Convention which would greatly simplify the work of the general Conference.

What we have in view is a universal Convention, and for that reason we are grateful to the United States of America for bringing us their assistance, although they are not Members of the League. In accordance with the aspirations which have been voiced on many occasions by the Council and the Assembly, we must hope that the future Convention which we have in view will also be signed by the Soviet Republic as well as by other States not Members of the League of Nations. Since we have universality in view, we should endeavour to build in a form which would enable the various States Members of the League to adhere sooner or later to that Convention on terms as acceptable to them as to the other signatories. On the other hand, it is obvious that the Members of the League of Nations have been called upon by the Council to prepare the Convention can only undertake that work on the basis of the Covenant. Article 8 of which confers upon the Council very important powers and duties. The Council prepares, in fact, plans for reduction of armaments, such plans to be examined afresh at least every ten years, and the limit thus fixed is not to be exceeded without the consent of the Council. Consequently, we must endeavour to give the greatest elasticity to our preparatory work, to make it as adaptable as possible and to avoid drafting any too rigid clauses which might bring the written law into conflict with political realities, which are always liable to change. At the same time, we should consider measures calculated to facilitate the execution of the administration of the Convention. In building up the general structure of the draft Convention, it seems to me that the Commission will have to consider in the first place the limitation of armaments to be laid down with regard to the three great categories which the technical Committees have examined: that is to say, effective, material and budgets. Once those three great categories have been adopted, we can then go on to consider within each of them the general problems with regard to which an agreement is desirable on the question of principle before we go into technical details.

Having said this, I now propose that we begin our work by a general discussion, which will, however, have to be as short as possible. We will then see whether the work will have to be continued in Sub-Committees, and what terms of reference will have to be given to those Sub-Committees. Let us therefore begin our work at once. At the same time, I should like to take this opportunity of paying a tribute of gratitude and admiration to Sub-Committees A and B, the Joint Commission, as well as the Committee of Experts on Budgets and the Committee of Experts on Civil Aviation, for their excellent reports, without which we should not be able to carry out our large task.

2. General Discussion.

Viscount CECIL (British Empire). — Mr. President — I hope I shall not be deemed impertinent if I venture to say that your address has greatly facilitated the duties of this Commission and has laid down many admirable principles by which I hope our discussion will be guided. With none of them do I find myself in more full and complete agreement than that in which you recommended to all the members of this Commission the necessity for adopting a conciliatory attitude and being ready for any compromise that they think it possible to accept. I feel with you, sir, that this meeting of the Preparatory Commission is likely to be of very great importance. We are met, I suppose, to consider the results of the enquiries that our technical Sub-Committees have been carrying out, but I agree that you must feel there will be a profound disappointment in the world unless we can show, at the end of our session, a definite and concrete advance in the path towards reduction and limitation of armaments, for I am convinced that it is quite unnecessary, speaking to this audience, or indeed to any audience of thinking men, to insist on the vast importance of the movement in which we are engaged. One of my fellow-countrymen said that the nations must either disarm or perish; and when you consider what is the nature of modern armaments, what are the developments that have taken place in those armaments even since the close of the Great War; when you consider the great shock to many parts of our civilisation that the late war caused and you imagine to yourselves what a similar catastrophe with the new armaments might cause, it really is a question of whether we can take advantage of this period of comparative calm, while the recollection of the great events of the war are still fresh, to build up safeguards against a future. That is the gravest question that faces any thinking man or thinking woman at the present day. I am not going to attempt to sketch to you more than in the very briefest outline the history of this question; I will not go further back than the Conference at Paris, though, of course, this question has a very much longer history than that. I will only remind you that at that Conference obligations of an inter- national character were undertaken to forward the cause of reduction and limitation of
armaments. The President has referred to Article 8, but he knows as well as I do that there were other texts which might have been quoted to the same effect. I believe I am right in saying that everyone of us is more or less bound by the declarations, or some of them, that were made at Paris on that occasion, and I am confident that there is not a single Government represented in this room which does not desire to fulfil to the very utmost, in spirit as well as in letter, the obligations which they then undertook; nor can it be said with any truth that the League of Nations has been negligent in the matter. From its very inception this question of the reduction and limitation of armaments was profoundly considered. You will remember how, at first, an attempt was made to approach the question by way of the cognate question of security, and proposals were submitted which it was thought would so increase the security of all the nations that they would be more ready to accept an efficient scheme of reduction and limitation of armaments. That particular proposal did not succeed. Then came the so-called Protocol of Geneva, where it was sought to add to the subject of security the subject of arbitration and to utilise that also in the cause of reduction and limitation of armaments. That also, ultimately, did not succeed, and there was left nothing — at least, I see no other course left — except a direct approach to the question of disarmament itself, and the French delegation will, I hope, forgive me for saying that it was on its initiative that the present phase of the movement was taken.

In 1929, the French delegation proposed the establishment of the Preparatory Commission. It was considered very carefully at the Assembly of that year and subsequently at the Council of December of that year, and in the end this Commission was established, and it was in the first instance bidden to make enquiries into a number of preliminary questions, which it proceeded to do by the appointment of the technical Sub-Commissions to which the President has just now alluded. These Sub-Commissions devoted immense zeal and great skill to the consideration of these questions. One set of them — those which we are accustomed to call Sub-Commission B and its Committees — arrived at certain unanimous recommendations. Sub-Commission A was not so fortunate; there were considerable differences of opinion, but undoubtedly no one who has read that very admirable document, the report of Sub-Commission A, can fail to recognise the great ability which was brought to bear upon the question. An admirable collection of arguments will be found in that report, so that we shall have no excuse whatever in this Commission if we say that we do not understand or are yet insufficiently informed upon any thesis or upon any point which was considered by that Sub-Commission.

It is quite true that there has been criticism in my country and, I have no doubt, in others of the delay in the proceedings which have taken place since December 1925. I cannot think myself that that criticism is just. The operation in which we are engaged is not only of vast importance but of great intricacy and great difficulty. It would have shown a whole and complete misapprehension of what we really had to do if we had attempted to rush the matter or to deal with it without full consideration and without full examination; but the fact that that criticism has been made — I think I may say has been made pretty generally — shows the general trend of public opinion on the subject. I have no right to speak of any country but my own, but, speaking of my own country, I am thoroughly convinced that there is the strongest possible desire for a general scheme of reduction and limitation of armaments, and my Government is prepared to lend its assistance to the utmost to secure such a scheme. If British public opinion has at any time had any doubts on this subject, it has never been that it has doubted the desirability of the end in view, but, owing to the very long and difficult discussions that have taken place, and to other circumstances, there is no doubt at all that there have been questions raised from time to time as to the practicability of any such reduction and limitation. I do not think that is surprising considering the very long history not only of our discussions on the subject but the long discussions on the subject that the history of the world will show, and it does seem to me, if I may say so, that the task of the Commission on the present occasion, the great task that is set before it, is to show that reduction and limitation of armaments is indeed a practical policy, that it can be done, that there is no insuperable difficulty in the way, and I am sure that is true and that, if we can show it, then it will remain for the States, for the Governments and peoples to say definitely whether it shall be done. Our business is to show the way; it is for them to say whether or not they will take it.

If I have rightly stated the task that is before us, the question is: What ought we to do to accomplish it? I was glad to hear the President say that it would be quite improper and unnecessary for us to enter again into all the discussions that took place before our Sub-Commission; that would be to do over again the work which has already been so admirably done. Nor do I think it likely that we should be able to find any fresh arguments or fresh considerations which were not before the Sub-Commission. I think clearly our business is to show the way that they have accumulated for us and to produce some concrete definite result out of it.

I want at the very outset of this part of my observations to draw attention to the very large measure of agreement on very important questions that has already been reached. In the first place it is agreed, as far as our proceedings are concerned, that land, sea and air armaments all form part of a common problem; that to be really successfully solved the questions that arise with respect to each of them must be jointly treated. No doubt it is quite true that, though this joint treatment is part of the scheme on which we are agreed, yet, when we come to deal with each armament in itself, separate considerations must obviously arise. Joint treatment and separate consideration: on these two points we have reached an agreement.

Secondly, with respect to the question of whether we ought to proceed by general or regional limitation. It seems to follow that, if we are to deal with all the three branches of
arms together, a general limitation is by far the most preferable, because, although it may be possible to have regional limitation of land armaments and, at any rate at present, to some extent of air armaments, you cannot have a regional limitation of sea armaments, for the only bounds to the mobility of fleets are the shores of the sea; and therefore that must be dealt with, as it seems to me, as a general problem; and we are, at any rate, engaged by general agreement, on the task of seeking a solution by way of a general limitation of armaments in this Commission.

Thirdly — and this, perhaps, is the most important of the practical points on which we are agreed — we are agreed that a reduction and limitation must affect peace-time armaments alone; that is to say, we agreed at a very early meeting of this Commission that the ultimate strength or the ultimate power of a State depends on its natural resources, including population, and its geographical position, and that by their very nature it is difficult or impossible to limit either of those, and that therefore, at any rate at the present stage of the controversy, we must leave that aspect of the question out and deal with the actually existing peace-time armaments. Although I am not quite sure whether I shall be right in saying that the way we must leave that aspect of the question out and deal with the actually existing peace-time armaments. Although I am not quite sure whether I shall be right in saying that the way we must leave that aspect of the question out and deal with the actually existing peace-time armaments. Although I am not quite sure whether I shall be right in saying that the way we must leave that aspect of the question out and deal with the actually existing peace-time armaments. Although I am not quite sure whether I shall be right in saying that the way we must leave that aspect of the question out and deal with the actually existing peace-time armaments. Although I am not quite sure whether I shall be right in saying that the way we must leave that aspect of the question out and deal with the actually existing peace-time armaments.
to be true, having read and having studied these subjects as well as I can, and that is that I do honestly and in my heart believe that they are much more cases of misunderstanding than of real, fundamental disagreement, and I myself have very good hopes that, when we look at it from a strictly practical point of view, the difficulties will not turn out to be so great as some people think. I do not say it in the least by way of criticism of the Sub-Commisions; I do not think they could have done anything else; but, in reading their discussions, I sometimes wondered whether they had approached the question occasionally too much as a matter of theory. Now, if we are to succeed — and we must succeed — we must aim not at what is theoretically perfect but what is practically possible. I therefore say very distinctly and very clearly — and I hope anyone who cares to know the opinion of the British Government will observe what I say — that we do very strongly feel that in any attempted solution full account must be taken of the actual possibilities in different countries; that is to say that, when you are dealing with the Continental countries, you have got to take full account of the necessities of their military organisation, and, when you are dealing with the problem of maritime countries, you have got to take account of their naval requirements and necessities. For if we are to get on, if we are to achieve results at this meeting, I do feel very profoundly that, as you, sir, were good enough to hint in your address — that we must aim this time at drawing up a draft Convention. I think unless we get as far as that we shall gravely disappoint the hopes of the public. I can think of nothing else which would meet the desires which they have formed. I do not think that we should attempt to insert in that Convention the figures of the agreed armaments. I do not think we have reached the point when that is possible; but I do think that we ought to put into that Convention everything else, the whole frame of the Convention, everything except the necessity of writing in the figures of the agreed armaments, which must ultimately, I think, be a matter for the Conference itself to decide — not only to decide but possibly to consider. At any rate, I do not ask that that should be considered here, but I do ask, and I do hope very earnestly, that my colleagues will agree to make the great attempt to form a draft Convention complete in all respects except for the figures.

The British Government have, I need not say, in common with all the other Governments, been considering this question with the greatest care, and they have thought that probably the best way they can help in a solution of this very grave question is to present to this Commission a draft project of Convention, not, of course, with a view of imposing the solutions there stated upon their colleagues — that would be an absurd pretension — but to form the basis of a discussion which we hope will be more fruitful than any other way of approaching this delicate and difficult subject. I have drawn up that Convention, and before I proceed with my observations I will ask the Secretariat to be good enough to hand round copies in English and French of that Convention (Annex 1). As the text of the British draft Convention is before the Commission, I need not do more than go very rapidly through its provisions to explain what it is that it does. It has no Preamble; that is in my judgment a defect and, when we have completed the discussion of the clauses of the draft Convention, if the Commission is willing, that will have to be supplied. The draft Convention is divided into five chapters. The first clause of the first chapter lays down the broad general principle that we agree to limit our land, naval and air armaments to the figures laid down in certain tables of Annex I of the present Convention. There, again, it is evidently no use putting in those tables until we get rather further on with our discussion, and you will not find them annexed to the Convention, though there is no difficulty in drafting them. Then comes the second clause, which provides that in certain cases the provisions of the Convention shall be suspended; they are: (1) war; (2) rebellion, or other grave emergency; and (3) permission of the Council of the League of Nations. That, of course, is following Article 8 and is almost a necessary provision in some form or another, at any rate for those who are Members of the League of Nations. If that suspension takes place and consequently an increase of armaments is allowed, notice is to be given, and as soon as the emergency has passed the armaments are to be reduced again to their original figure. Then come Articles 2 to 4, which deal with the budgetary position, and all that we have so far found it possible to insert in that respect are two clauses saying that in the first place, the parties to the Convention shall communicate, in the form of the model statement, which one of our Sub-Committees is in the course of drawing up, an account of every proposed expenditure, and then, at a later date, an account of the amount that they actually have expended. I think it is quite possible that some of my colleagues will wish to go further than that; all I can say is that there are grave practical difficulties in going further than that, but, of course, we shall be most ready to take part in any discussion that may be raised on the point.

Then we come to "Land Armaments". In the fifth article the broad general principle is stated that the limitation of land armaments should be in the main effected by limiting the number of effectives, and there follows a word of explanation that that means troops who can, within a period — which is left blank, but a very short period — be used in the front line of the fight. In that matter I can quite conceive that there may be differences of opinion. The British Government have necessarily been guided to some extent by their own technical advisers, but it is a matter which I hope will be capable of arrangement without very much difficulty. Then comes Article 6. The first clause says that the number of effectives is to be that stated in Table 1. The second and third prescribe the number of officers and non-commissioned officers that ought to be allowed to each of the armaments agreed upon.

Then comes "Naval Armaments". There we have simply adopted, provisionally at any rate, as we have had the matter discussed, the method of limitation by categories, the method that was no doubt adopted in the Washington Agreement. I do not think I need elaborate it as it is very well known to anyone who has discussed the question, and I am myself
satisfied that some such arrangement is almost essential for a large naval Power, but it is possible that some other solution may be better for other Powers. In any case, the one thing that seems to me vital, so far as those articles are concerned, is that everyone shall know, from the outset, what they are to expect in the naval armaments of other countries.

Then comes "Air Armaments". The point of view adopted is that for which the air representatives of the British Government contended in Sub-Commission A. The matter is admittedly one of the greatest difficulty and one on which I shall be most anxious to hear what my colleagues have got to say.

Then as to the miscellaneous provisions, there is first a provision (Article 11) that all the high contracting parties undertake to put the Convention in force. Then comes Article 12, which is the one which deals with the question of supervision, and the idea of that article — which has no doubt this difference to a very large extent to Article 11 of the Covenant — is that, if any Power has reason to suspect that some other Power is not carrying out the Convention, it is to be entitled, without in any way forfeiting its friendly relations to the Power in question, to make representations to the Powers which are Members of the Council of the League and are mentioned in Article 13, namely, the Powers without whose consent the Convention cannot come into force. If that complaint is made, then investigation is to be ordered and the only important proviso is that, if the investigation comprises the suggestion of sending a Commission of Enquiry, that Commission can only be sent if the Power into whose territory it is proposed to send it agrees to its despatch.

Then, I think, the rest of the Convention is of great importance, except the provision as to ratification, which sets out, in the second paragraph of Article 13, the Powers whose ratification is essential to the coming into force of the Convention. Then there is Article 14, which says that, with respect to the sea, it shall last for ten years and, with respect to the land and air, it shall last for five years. These figures are evidently matters which are open to discussion, but the reason why we selected ten years for the sea is because the building of warships is a such a long process that it was thought desirable that a rather longer period should be fixed for the limitation of the fleet than for the army and air force, which are more easily and more rapidly changed in strength. That is all, I think, I need trouble the Commission with as to giving notice of termination and so on.

That is the general line of the Convention we suggest, and I should like to say at once that my Government regard it as the first step — not as a complete scheme but as a first step — which they think, not in its details but in its broad general lines, and subject to a discussion on some of its more important provisions, might be adopted as a definite progress towards the goal we are trying to reach. There is one thing that I ought perhaps to mention and that is that, if Article 6 is adopted, I think it will be necessary to insert some definition of "effectives". What that definition may be has not been inserted, because I think it is one of the matters which may be most easily settled by discussion and on which I hope discussion will not really give so grave a difference of opinion as is sometimes thought.

That is the draft which the British Government propose. I do not know yet (though I hope we shall know soon) whether any other Governments have also prepared drafts. Personally, I hope very much that they have done so; I think it would be very useful, because there is nothing like putting into actual form in a document that is to be effective the views of any Government, in order to be quite sure what those views really are. I should welcome those drafts whether they were in accord with or whether they differed from the draft which I have just presented. As to how those drafts are to be dealt with, that is a matter which the Convention will no doubt wish to discuss, but I wish to put forward one suggestion as a possibility — that, if there is more than one draft submitted to the Commission, there may be practical difficulties in dealing with them jointly. It would be necessary to take one or other as the basis of discussion, and, if such drafts are presented, the Commission may wish some effort to be made to get those drafts into a common form, so that it will only have one document before it which it can discuss, amend, reject or alter, rather than two documents, which I think would be confusing. I should welcome any such attempt being made. I am very anxious to diminish as far as possible any unnecessary subjects of controversy. If we succeed in getting a single draft, or indeed several, then I should ask the Commission to take up the one draft, if it is possible to have one draft, then the several drafts, and deal with them as far as possible clause by clause, concentrating its discussions on one problem at a time, because I think that is the only way in which we shall really reach useful and satisfactory results.

The essential thing in this matter is that we should succeed. As far as the British Government are concerned, I am here to state in the plainest possible language that they will do their very utmost to prevent any preconceived idea of their own unnecessarily troubling the agreement of the Commission. They are anxious to reach a successful result. I am quite sure that the public opinion of the world, as has so well been said, is waiting for the decision of the work of this Commission; it is anxiously looking for it. It knows profoundly in its soul and heart the immense issues which depend on the success or failure of our efforts. It is profoundly anxious that we should succeed. I only hope and pray that we may all collaborate, as I am sure we shall, so that this deep hope and anxiety may not be disappointed.

M. PAUL-BONCOUR (France). — In reply to the hope expressed at the end of Viscount Cecil's speech, I consider that the best evidence which we can give of our desire to succeed is to lose no time in stating our ideas on the subject. Moreover, I do not consider this as an opening session; we are not meeting for the first time to discuss this problem, and all the humanitarian reasons which have led to the desire to solve this problem have already been advanced in May 1926, when the first session of the Preparatory Commission was held. This
Commission is only carrying on the work which has already been commenced; indeed, during practically the whole interval between our two sessions the technical organs emanating from our own Commission have not ceased to carry on the work, and I wish to associate myself publicly with the tributes which Viscount Cecil and the President have just paid to their endeavours. Neither directly nor indirectly, now or at any future time, will I consent to belittle this work or consider it as negligible. Obviously, the opinions of the technical experts do not bind the Commission itself. It is now for the politicians representing their Governments to come to a decision on all these technical questions and opinions before them, and -- as Viscount Cecil and the President said just now -- to select those clear and precise points which will lead to success. Nevertheless, this success can only be achieved by the help of these technical studies. I consider that it would be a waste of time, and that we should be undertaking endless work, if we did not take into account the opinions expressed repeatedly on these problems by competent men who have considered them during many meetings and many months.

I am in entire agreement with the President and Viscount Cecil that the definite object of this session is to draw up the programme of the Conference itself, and to my mind we should be causing great disappointment to public opinion if we failed in this endeavour. If there is to be such a disappointment, I should prefer it to come at once. We must know if the Conference is possible or not. If the answer is no, let us say so. If the Conference is possible, let us furnish the subject-matter, and I agree that the only real matter to work on is the draft Convention -- that is to say, a skeleton draft Convention which would form the object of our deliberations, a general plan of an international contract, in which will be found the heavy, difficult and long task of filling in the blanks, i.e., putting in the actual figures of the effective, material and expenditure. It is certainly there that the difficulties will be greatest and that the points of view will differ most. However, an exchange of views will only be possible if there is, first of all, a scheme -- the draft Convention -- prepared and based on the opinions of the technical Committees. But is the best method of arriving at this draft Convention that which has just been outlined in the very important declaration of the representative of the British Empire? I would like, in a very friendly and respectful way, to query this. I am not saying that it is not: we shall see later on whether it is. For my part, I had contemplated another method. In taking up the work at the stage which it has reached, the different delegations will have expressed the opinions of their Governments not on the minor details plated another method. In taking up the work at the stage which it has reached, the different delegations will have expressed the opinions of their Governments not on the minor details of the work but on the work as a whole, thus bringing into prominence the few clear points of agreement, as Viscount Cecil wished just now. On these points in the work of the Sub-Committees a draft Convention should then have been drawn up -- a draft which would not necessarily have come from one or other of the delegations, and which perhaps would not have led to the inevitable opposition which might be caused by the draft submitted by the representative of the British Empire.

I give my views on the subject. Viscount Cecil has taken another point of view, and a draft Convention is now on the table. This is a different method of working from that which I had contemplated. I do not see the possibility of not submitting a draft Convention of my own less precise, giving the opinion of the French delegation, and I earnestly hope that other delegations will do the same. I sincerely trust that the discussions will not take the form of a debate between the British and French views on this subject; this has happened too often in the course of the preparatory work. I consider (in agreement with Viscount Cecil) that, as the draft Convention or Conventions should be sent to one or more sub-committees, these sub-committees should be informed of the views of the various Governments on the question of the reduction of armaments.

Mr. President, I consider, after what has just been said, that it is only a question of procedure and method of work. I do not think it is possible for my colleagues or for myself to go into the substance of the matter. My colleagues are less able to do so even than myself, because, thanks to the friendly statement which Viscount Cecil made to me a few days ago, I was already aware of some of the ideas which he was going to express, while a large number of the delegates were ignorant of them until to-day.

I hope either to-morrow or the day after to be able to submit a draft Convention, and I trust that others will be able to do the same.

General DE MARINIS (Italy). — As the Commission has only just learnt that two drafts are being submitted to it, of which one is already before us and the other is about to be submitted, I am unable to express an opinion upon them. This does not prevent me from paying great tribute to the intentions of their authors and to the efforts which they have made, and which no doubt they will make, to prevent or reduce the difficulties encountered in the course of our past work. It is not wise to attempt to overcome all these difficulties at once. It would be useful — I agree on this point with the opinion expressed by M. Paul-Boncour — if, before commencing the examination of the draft Convention, we came to an agreement on the general principles which should govern it. In other words, I do not think we should leave unsolved the questions which form the basis of our work. For, if we come to the Conference with the being sure of agreement on certain fundamental questions, we take upon ourselves the grave responsibility of prolonging its work, or even of risking a failure. I admire the optimism of Viscount Cecil regarding the technical report and I, but when I look at the actual facts, I consider that the numerous divergencies of opinion which have shown themselves in the technical Committees make it necessary to have a careful examination of the questions which have given rise to them. On the other hand, I agree with our President that the fullness of the discussions which have taken place in the technical Committees allow us to examine rapidly the questions concerning the controversial points, without going into the arguments
already expressed by the representatives of the various Governments in these Commissions. We already know these arguments and it is useless to repeat them.

I think, however, as the President said just now, that it is not sufficient merely to lay down certain principles or to adopt vague formulae likely to be agreed to in theory by everybody, because everyone will consider such vague formulae as corresponding to his own opinion; the differing interpretations will inevitably show themselves when we come to filling in the figures. I will quote an example of what I mean. It has been said that a Government should bring to the Conference definite proposals for the armaments which it considers necessary to its security. This is a basic principle. In my opinion, this principle should be completed by several commentaries, and, in case this Commission considers that it must be satisfied with a mere statement of this principle, I should like to give certain explanations, in order that they might at any rate figure in the Minutes.

I think that we all agree that the necessities of security should be estimated by taking account of the geographical position of the State in question, its vulnerability, its needs, the resources on which it can count, the security of its lines of communication, etc.—in one word, all the factors mentioned in Question 5 of the questionnaire sent to the technical Commissions, and of which these Commissions recognise the importance. I also think that the most important consideration that each State should have in view is that of the military strength of the States which surround it. If all countries were to do away with their armies, no country would have the right to be an exception, and, moreover, this would not be in the interest of any State. But as we are far from this radical solution, each country must take into account the armaments of its neighbours.

In this connection, I ask the Commission to permit me to submit a few considerations to which I attach great importance, since they allow me to explain the line which my country proposes to take and the basis on which it can collaborate in our work.

On several occasions, allusion has been made to the advantage of stabilising the present situation and of taking as a basis of reduction the present scale of armaments of the different countries. This principle appears to be at variance with international justice. In order to justify this principle, the existing armaments of all countries should correspond absolutely—and to the same extent for all—to the needs of their security and the international obligations which they have undertaken. I do not believe it to be so in reality. For instance, there are States which, for reasons of which they are the sole judges, have rapidly demobilised since the war. Amongst them I will mention that State which I have the honour to represent here, and in which the reduction of stocks of munitions and material in reserve, the disbanding of troops and the reduction of units were effected at a great rate soon after the war. Whether or not that was a good method of procedure is not a question which I wish to raise, but it is a fact. There are, on the contrary, other countries which, for good reasons which I recognise, have considered it necessary to retain powerful armies.

To stabilise the present situation would give an advantage to those countries which are at present more powerfully armed and put the others in a position of inferiority; public opinion of the latter countries would never submit to such a decision. There are sometimes reasons of high policy, or questions of finance, which induce a Government to allow its armaments to fall to a certain period below the real requirements for its defence. But under present conditions such a Government knows that, should necessity arise, it is free at any moment to take such measures as it thinks fit in the interest of its country.

If, however, in virtue of an international Convention, a Government has to renounce this liberty, and, for a certain period, undertake not to change its military situation, it must take the precautions necessary to avoid having this inferior position definitely stabilised. Consequently, I consider that the principle of proportioning the armaments to the needs of security must necessarily be preceded by a revision of the present scale of armaments and not by a stabilisation of them. In this way an atmosphere of international confidence is created, and useful progress can be made towards world peace.

Italy has clearly shown its desire for peace and work, and it will not abandon this course. It is well known that its military budget is a very modest one. Italy will agree to any step tending to ensure peace in the world. If the world agrees to adopt a limitation of armaments and effective, to adopt, for example, a maximum level of armaments for all however reduced it may be, my country is ready to accept it, on condition, however, that the scale is the same for all.

Italy is not asking for any privilege, but it considers that, in view of its geographical position, its population, its needs and its international obligations, its total armaments could not in any case, with any fairness, be less than the total armaments of any other Continental Power. If an agreement is come to on a common limit, however low, Italy will not make any objection.

There, gentlemen, is the path in which my Government desire to proceed. On this clear basis, I wish to assure my colleagues of our desire to bring about satisfactory results, and our wish to collaborate in the examination of any suggestion or proposal which may be submitted to us.

The Hon. Hugh Gibson (United States of America).—I hope I have not unduly alarmed my colleagues on the Preparatory Commission by asking for the privilege of speaking; I hasten to reassure them. I do not intend to make a speech, I merely wish to say how deeply the American delegation feels indebted to Viscount Cecil for his very valuable proposal, and how gratified it is at the announcement of M. Paul-Boncour that he proposes to bring forward another draft for consideration by the Preparatory Commission.
It will be remembered that, on the first day of our session last May, I raised the question as to just what we were working towards — whether it was a programme, an agenda or a definite draft Convention. It will also be remembered that I indicated my preference for this latter being, to my mind, the most practical method of work, and of advancing the work as far as possible before it should be put into the hands of a final Conference. I am still very strongly of that mind and am consequently very greatly gratified at the proposal which has been made by Viscount Cecil and acquiesced in by M. Paul-Boncour. I should also like to take this occasion to voice my very deep sense of obligation to M. Paul-Boncour for the generous manner in which he consented to waive his own preferences and to subordinate his own desires as to methods of work. The spirit of his statement on that subject is certainly a good augury for the success of our work, and I think we may well be gratified that we have begun this first session in such happy agreement as to methods.

It only remains for me to say that the American delegation asks for no higher privilege than to co-operate wholeheartedly in the work which begins under such good auspices.

M. Sato (Japan). — I have little to add to what has already been said by the honourable delegate of the United States. I wish to associate myself with him and with the honourable delegates of France and Italy in their expression of thanks to Viscount Cecil for the draft Convention he has kindly submitted to us. I concur also with the delegates who stated that they would be most happy to receive the French draft. The Commission will, I think, be unanimous in declaring that it will make every effort to fuse the two draft Conventions into a single draft to be presented to the general Conference on Disarmament.

Permit me now to express the feelings of the Government of Japan in regard to our labours.

The Government of Japan considers that the spirit of Article 8 of the Covenant requires that the total armaments permissible for each country should be fixed, in the last instance, by that country itself. In other words, the degree of limitation or reduction of armaments which any Power could accept ought to be fixed by that Power. Disarmament under coercion, as it were, imposed from outside, would have the very great drawback of awakening in the parties concerned the wish to supply the deficiencies in their national defences by indirect methods. The dangers of such a method of disarmament would be much greater than those incurred by allowing the present situation, with its freedom of armaments, to continue. In these circumstances, limitation or reduction of armaments, if it is to be effective, ought to be carried out by each State for itself, in a spirit of conciliation, but at the same time taking into account its special position in the world.

If we are to realise practical limitation or reduction of land, naval or air forces, the methods which we choose and the means which we employ must be easy of application and execution. If, with the aim of making disarmament as complete as possible, we adopted complicated methods, we should encounter grave difficulties, in view of the great differences in the geographical situation, the customs and the organisation and institutions of national defence in the various countries.

The result would inevitably be to delay the realisation of our work.

With regard to the draft Convention submitted by the honourable delegate of Great Britain, we think that, taken as a whole and in view of its simplicity, it would be suitable to serve as a basis of discussion, although, if I may be allowed to say so, it contains numerous points which are likely to raise the most varied discussion.

M. Yovanovitch (Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes). — This Commission has before it a draft Convention submitted by Viscount Cecil. I thought at first that the procedure we should follow would be that suggested by M. Paul-Boncour. With all respect to the honourable delegate of Great Britain, I must declare that it would not be possible for me to enter on an immediate discussion of this draft, and I venture to propose that the discussion on the British draft be postponed for a few days.

Count Bernstorff (Germany). — I quite appreciate the motives which have inspired M. Yovanovitch’s proposal, but I think that it would be preferable to go on with the general discussion, and then, if necessary, to adjourn until we have the draft Conventions before us. It seems to me that it would be to the advantage of most of the delegations to have another opportunity of exchanging ideas on the general question.

The President. — The draft which M. Paul-Boncour is to submit will probably be distributed to-morrow evening or on Wednesday morning. I think that it would be truly regrettable if we did not continue our work now. We could meet to-morrow afternoon at four o’clock to go on with the general discussion, but, if many delegates are opposed to this, we could adjourn our meeting till Wednesday afternoon.

M. Sokal (Poland). — I venture to support M. Yovanovitch’s proposal. General discussion, as proposed by the delegate for Germany, is very desirable, but it will certainly be more useful if it is held after we have received the drafts which are to be distributed. It would be better for us to know both the British and the French drafts before continuing the discussion and to adjourn until Thursday or Wednesday afternoon.

M. Comnêne (Roumania). — I concur with the proposals which have been made to adjourn our discussions for one or two days, in order that we may study the very important work which has been submitted to us. I venture also to ask Viscount Cecil to be good enough
perhaps to complete his draft by adding a Preamble to it. It seems to me that if we had this Preamble and could examine it at the same time as the draft, we could do more useful work. This Preamble will perhaps contain provisions which take into account certain special situations, or perhaps it will take the form of a sort of exposé of certain points which are not developed in the draft properly.

On the other hand, I am afraid that, if we continue the discussion, we may be wasting our time, since we shall have to resume the discussion of the same subjects as soon as we have studied the two, or perhaps three, documents which are going to be submitted. I say three, because it is possible that another delegation, after studying the British and French drafts, will consider it its duty to present a third.

I repeat, then, that I support M. Yovanovitch's proposal.

Viscount Cecil (British Empire). - I only rise to reply to M. Comnène's appeal to me. I do not think the Preamble, as far as I could draft it at this minute, would be of much assistance to him. It would only state the reasons why a Disarmament Convention was desirable and that the object of it was to reduce and limit the armed strength of the various high contracting Powers. I think it would be very undesirable to draft a Preamble until the Convention has been completed, because the Preamble leads up to the Convention. You cannot really lead up to the Convention until you know what it is. I do not think it would help M. Comnène at all to see such a Preamble as I should be able to draft at this moment.

With regard to the question of an adjournment, I should be very reluctant to press any of my colleagues to do anything which they might think would put them at a disadvantage. At the same time, it seems rather unfortunate to begin our proceedings by having an adjournment for a day or two. I do not think that would produce a very good impression. As far as I am concerned, it makes no difference, because I have made arrangements to stay in Geneva indefinitely.

M. DE BROUCKÈRE (Belgium). - I have followed this debate on procedure with great attention, and it seems to me that we are not far from reaching agreement. We shall certainly be able to arrive at a compromise, which will also be of good omen for other compromises which will prove necessary in the future.

Everyone, I think, agrees — many speakers have stated this in the clearest possible terms — in considering that the real general discussion (in which, by a close examination of the text, we try to reach solutions acceptable to all) cannot begin before the texts are known. How can we do this work without taking into consideration Viscount Cecil's draft (of which we have only a vague idea), without taking into consideration also the French text — and we do not yet know what it will be — and other texts which may be submitted to us? It would be futile to commence our task under unfavourable conditions and to risk having to do it over again.

Besides, the delegates may have points of view to put forward. Perhaps, instead of submitting texts, they have verbal declarations to make on the part of their Governments. Could we not hear them to-morrow? Furthermore, the solution will depend on what the delegates desire. If some of them intend to make declarations, we can hear them to-morrow; if not, we could employ to-morrow in studying Lord Cecil's draft, and M. Paul-Boncour's if it is ready.

The President. — Does any delegate desire to make a statement?

Count Bernstorff (Germany). - Of course, if I am the only delegate desiring to speak to-morrow, I do not insist. Nevertheless, I agree with Viscount Cecil in thinking that it would create a bad impression if we lost one or two whole days.

The Commission rose at 7.20 p.m.

SECOND PUBLIC MEETING.

Held at Geneva on Tuesday, March 22nd, 1927, at 4 p.m.

President: M. Loudon (Netherlands).

3. General Discussion. (Continuation).

Count Bernstorff (Germany). - Mr. President and gentlemen — It is not with a very easy conscience that I rise to address you to-day as I have somewhat of a feeling that it is I who am, at any rate in part, responsible for bringing the distinguished members of this Commission away from the sunlit shores of the lake which is resplendent in the full beauty of spring. At the same time, the only reason we are here is to carry our work through to a successful conclusion, and I hope that the observations which I have the honour to make will not constitute the whole of the proceedings this afternoon, and that in this matter my responsibility in this connection will be somewhat diminished. If our President expressed himself in favour of the proposal to hold a meeting to-day, it was certainly with the object of avoiding losing any of the time which should be devoted to our practical work, that is to say, to the discussion of the concrete proposals which have been submitted to us or will be submitted at our next meeting. You will perhaps tell me, gentlemen, that it would be
somewhat superfluous for us, old acquaintances as we are, to embark on general discussions regarding opinions and theses. I wish, however, to lay stress on the fact that the very thorough and painstaking investigations of our experts, to whom I also would like to pay a tribute, should have a practical sequel. Let us make no mistake about it. As our President said yesterday, the attention of the world, and especially that of the small States and of the States already disarmed, is once again concentrated on Geneva. Those States demand, and with good reason, that they shall not suffer a disappointment, a disappointment for which none of us would desire to shoulder the responsibility. Let me follow out this idea a little further. The States which have been disarmed by international treaties — and, needless to say, in saying that I have my own country directly in mind — are perfectly entitled to demand that general disarmament should be achieved. The disarmament of the country which I have the honour to represent is complete. You are well aware that, according to the Treaty of Versailles, this disarmament should only be the prelude to general disarmament, as has, moreover, been definitely stated by several members of this Commission. When, in May last, I had the honour to make statements on behalf of my Government, Germany was not yet a Member of the League of Nations. To-day, we share in all the duties and all the rights which arise out of our co-operation in this great institution. It is our earnest desire to work at the task of making the League of Nations an effective and living reality, with the object of avoiding wars and of reaching the goal which is contemplated in the Covenant, that is to say, of ushering in an era in which there can only be one kind of war, namely, a war between the League of Nations and an aggressor — this being, moreover, a kind of war which is in practice impossible. At the same time, such a purpose cannot be achieved so long as the armaments of the countries which are Members of the League are as disproportionate as they are at the present day. The condition of disarmament will have to be such that no State will be powerful enough to prevail by force in a contest with the League; at the same time, each State will have to maintain sufficient forces to enable the League of Nations, by a combination of the forces of the various countries, to enforce the common will. Wherever we give a moment's consideration to the organisation of the League, the organisation will never be able to work in a reliable and satisfactory manner.

It is with great satisfaction that I welcome the fact that Viscount Cecil has submitted proposals to our Commission which will probably enable us to begin at once on the practical part of the work before us. I am equally glad to note the spirit of conciliation in which M. Paul-Boncour associated himself with the method proposed by Viscount Cecil. Without wishing to go into any detailed consideration of the British draft, which I have not yet fully studied, I would like to remind you how difficult and intricate is the problem before us. It will not be sufficient to solve one part only of that problem; if the problem is not approached as a whole, we shall never succeed in solving it; we shall only change its appearance by substituting one drawback for another.

Disarmament has two different aspects — that of the reduction and that of the limitation of armaments. I do not wish to depreciate the necessity and importance of limitation in itself; I think it is generally agreed that in the present circumstances of the world, limitation is of practical interest only to a very limited number of countries. At the present moment, the world is scarcely exposed to the risk of competition in armaments; the burden upon us, rather the weight of excessive armaments and the danger arising out of the inequality in the scale of armaments. This inequality, as I have already pointed out, may destroy the effectiveness of the League as an instrument for the maintenance of peace. The most important part of our work is therefore to devise methods which will enable us to achieve a reduction of armaments or, to use the term which was employed yesterday by the honourable delegate of Italy, to achieve a revision in the present scale of armaments, a revision the necessity for which he explained to us in so striking a manner. It is in this field of work that real and effective results will have to be obtained. A mere semblance of solutions will satisfy no one and would merely engender further dangers.

The Government of Germany is firmly resolved to co-operate earnestly in any real effort at disarmament. It could not give its approval to factitious solutions. The important thing for us at the beginning of our discussions is to make certain of the goal which we wish to reach. In our view, that goal is a reduction of armaments which would enable a levelling-down of armaments to be achieved, which would alone be calculated to guarantee the full effectiveness of the action of the League of Nations. Once we have decided what the final goal is, we must then endeavour to find the measures and the methods which would enable us, by stages if necessary, to reach it. I will not at the present moment put forward any special proposal; I shall be glad to accept any method provided it is certain to take us forward to the real goal of our work and not lead us into the impasse of a factitious solution. Our Preparatory Commission should therefore endeavour to reach positive results — results which will cover the whole of the problem. As was pointed out yesterday by the honourable delegate of France, they will have to ensure the final success of the general Disarmament Conference for which we have met to prepare. It is for all these reasons that I felt bound to express myself in favour of a continuance of the general discussion, which would give us the opportunity of bringing out clearly the great principles before going on to the discussion of particular proposals. The solution of the problem of disarmament is the acid test of the work of the League of Nations. In Article 8 of the Covenant, disarmament takes precedence over every other kind of work of the League. For many years this problem has engaged the attention of the Assembly, of the Council, of numerous commissions and of international conferences held at Washington and in other capitals of the great world. Also at Locarno, at the time of the conclusion of the great European Agreements, stress was laid on this central problem and in the Final Protocol the contracting
parties solemnly undertook to co-operate sincerely in the work already undertaken by the
League of Nations in connection with disarmament, and to endeavour to achieve such
disarmament by way of general agreement.

M. Sokal (Poland).—The Polish delegation fully shares the views which were so eloquently
expressed yesterday by the honourable delegates of France and Great Britain, that is to
say, that it is necessary that we should achieve practical results and that we should avoid
having the work in our Commission finishing with failure, which would be calculated profoundly
to disappoint world public opinion. The Polish delegation also fully shares the views expressed
by the President, namely, that the solution which we shall reach as the result of our work
cannot take the form of the drafting of hollow and vague forms of words, behind which the
problem of disarmament would remain unsolved. We think it would be preferable to carry out
work which would be partial in character even though on a limited scale, but at the same
time constructive work, thus taking a step forward on the road to disarmament. In order
that this work may not be futile, those who are responsible for it must bear in mind the essential
principles of the Covenant of the League of Nations and existing political realities. If this
is not done, as someone very aptly said, there is a risk of making victims or dupes of di-
sarmament. Fate, which always shapes the future, has in the case of my country taught it a
cruel lesson. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the neighbouring countries and
all the great States of Europe maintained large professional armies. Poland based the whole
of its military power on the mass levy of citizens, who were only called to the colours in the
event of aggression from outside. This position of actual disarmament of one country among
many other nations powerfully armed led Poland to the disaster of which you all know. The
memory of this disaster does not prevent Poland, however, from being profoundly attached
to the idea of disarmament; but our country, which has recovered its independence, desires
that disarmament should be surrounded by all the guarantees of security which were lacking
in the eighteenth century. In this manner, instead of bringing people to disaster, disarmament
will confer upon them well-being and prosperity.
The Polish Government has on many occasions expressed its determination to co-operate
enthusiastically in the great work of disarmament, which is that of peace, and which will one
day be the League of Nations’ greatest claim to glory. Now, as before, it is ready to co-operate
in the most sincere manner with the efforts which will be attempted by the League of Nations
with a view to achieving practical results in the limitation of armaments. The aim in view
can be achieved on condition that the problem be dealt with on the lines of true international
solidarity: that is to say, respecting the mind and the vital needs of each country.
I shall not discuss the particular position in which Poland finds itself owing to its geogra-
phical situation. I would merely point out that the facts of this position have already been
recognised as regards Poland and also as regards certain other countries; I consider that
we can rejoice that the Preparatory Commission, which has met for its third session, has now
before it the results of the systematic and thorough work of its Sub-Commissions and Sub-
Committees because, notwithstanding the differences of opinion which were expressed in those
Committees, we are now in a position, thanks to their valuable work, to draw general inferences
from that work and to reach, I hope, a unanimous agreement regarding the essential principles
which we have to consider.
I should like also to pay a tribute to the very conscientious work of our Sub-Committees;
but I must remind my colleagues of the valuable work of the various sections of the Secretariat
of the League of Nations, and particularly that of the Disarmament Section, which is so ably
directed by M. de Madariaga. Our Commission is only carrying on with the work, the scope
of which has now become more clearly defined.
We have now reached the point when we realise that the term “disarmament”, which is
often employed in different senses, really represents an intricate notion in which political,
economic, financial, social and other factors often dominate the purely technical military
factor. Following the painstaking work of the Committees, we must recognise frankly and
openly that, in the present circumstances, we cannot yet contemplate a reduction of armaments
in the full meaning of that term. It is becoming evident that, without moral disarmament,
no material disarmament on any large scale can take place. All those who were frank enough
to state that our Commission should confine its work to endeavouring to obtain practical solu-
tions which are restricted for the moment to the limitation of armaments have rendered a great
service to the cause of disarmament. The Polish delegation is ready to make every endeavour
to assist in preparing by common agreement the programme of the forthcoming Disarmament
Conference, and will assist in every way in preparing the draft Convention.
I hope and I am convinced that general agreement will be reached not merely regarding
such a draft Convention but also as regards the general political conditions which will make
it possible to carry it into effect. The Commission will thus carry out its work and will find
an effective means of putting a stop to competition in armaments whilst at the same time
guaranteeing to nations the security which is indispensable to them.
The President: I understand that M. Paul-Boncour’s draft will probably be distributed
to-night.
The Commission rose at 4.45 p.m.
The draft Convention submitted by the French delegation was distributed to the Commis-

sion (Annex 2).

M. COMNÈNE (Roumania). — Mr. President and gentlemen — When I supported the

proposal for adjournment put forward the day before yesterday by M. Yovanovitch, I assure

you that it was not my intention just to get the opportunity of taking a walk along the sunny

banks of the lake. I wished and as I think our other colleagues who agreed with me wished

thereby to show my respect for any proposal put forward by the representative of Great

Britain, Viscount Cecil. Furthermore, I had another aim in view, and that was that we should

not give the public the impression of over-hasty work in studying the very serious problems

before us. For my part, no matter whether we have to stay here for four weeks, for six

weeks or even for ten weeks, I entirely agree with Viscount Cecil when he remarked that we

must stay here indefinitely if necessary provided we succeed in the end. For I think it very

important to emphasise a fact which cannot too often be repeated here that, after the failure

of the Treaty of Mutual Guarantee, as well as that of the Protocol of 1924 a failure of the

present work would deal a death-blow at the League, and also for years even to all ideas of

universal brotherhood. The Roumanian delegation is in a particularly favourable position

to be able to speak of peace and universal brotherhood at this meeting because, at the time

of the Berlin Congress, Roumania constantly pressed for the neutralisation of its country

in order that it might disarm ; and it obtained for half a century the praises of men like Cavour,

Bismarck and, later on, of Briand, who described it as the guardian of peace on the threshold

of the East. At each Assembly of the League of Nations it has renewed its appeal to all its

neighbours in the interests of peace. Hardly eight days ago, moreover, the voice of Roumania

was expressed in Parliament by the Prime Minister in the form of a new offer to its neighbours

of a pact of non-aggression. It is to be hoped, therefore, for the sake of European peace, that

thus at least the voice of Roumania will be duly heard. At the same time, the Roumanian

diplomacy does not lose sight of the very serious realities affecting the position of certain

countries, whose safety, unhappily, is not safeguarded either by a fortunate geographical

position or by treaties of the Locarno Agreement. I think I should fail in my duty if I did

not express my thanks to our colleagues Viscount Cecil and M. Paul-Boncour for the admirable

drafts which we have before us. It may be that I differ from them with regard to certain

passages in their drafts; but I recognise the great qualities of their work. Especially do I

recognise the great quality that it has shown us for the first time since the commencement

of the world, an ideal which has hitherto been inaccessible — the idea of the universal limitation

of armaments.

For the first time, gentlemen, the eighteen countries here represented, perhaps eighteen

of the most important countries of the world, have before them the vague work produced by

an idealist but concrete proposals drafted after full consideration by official representatives

of some of the greatest and most important countries in the world, and drafted with the full

intention that they shall lead to success.

After the brief study of these drafts which it has been possible for our delegations to

undertake in the time available, it seems to me that, except on certain points happily very

few, there is no very great difference of view between the two documents, and, even where

difficulties seem to arise, I have full faith that the authors will show the necessary good will

and spirit of conciliation in order to reach a single text.

As regards the main issue in this question, I may tell Viscount Cecil and M. Paul-Boncour

quite frankly that their drafts have somewhat disappointed us. I say us, because I believe

that there are several of us who have the same impression. Indeed, it is clear that the special

position in which we, and some of our neighbours, are placed created a privilege for us, a

privilege which was recognised in Article 29 of the Convention for the Supervision of the

Trade in Arms. We hope it will soon be possible for us to dispense with this privilege, which

only the exceptional circumstances of which you are aware forced us to take. However,

that point is not at present under discussion, and I do not wish to press it, but I reserve the

right to refer to that matter at the opportune moment.

I must, however, refer to a question which is of great concern to all the countries of the

world, and that is the question of security. Gentlemen, I may say that I could not possibly

agree that the question of disarmament could be divorced from that of security and dealt

with as an entirely separate matter. The Covenant, we must remember, contains, apart from

Article 8, also Articles 16 and 17, which entitles me to make that statement. The well-

known Resolution 14 also entitles me to make that statement. The Protocol, which I hope

and trust is not really a dead letter but which, by the powerful wishes of the people, will be

revived, and in fact must be revived if our work is not finally to crumble, also entitles me to

make that statement. Finally, Article 8 of the Covenant, by reason of which we are now

meeting here, entitles me to make that statement.
I would like to thank and congratulate Viscount Cecil and M. Paul-Boncour for introducing the idea of security to some extent in the Preamble to their drafts. At the same time, I would beg them to use their great skill in drafting to prepare something which will be more definite and would be better calculated to satisfy the nations and thus to avoid giving the impression that we are being dictated to by Article 8 of the Covenant as to forget that there are other articles to that instrument which are at least as important. I do not wish at the present moment to discuss the drafts in detail, but the Roumanian delegation reserves the right to give every help it can when we come to consider a single text, which I hope we shall obtain very shortly if a Drafting Committee is appointed. I would like, however, to make a suggestion which I think might be of value to the Drafting Committee if it is set up. I think that it would be desirable, that it would be prudent and — I emphasise this — that it would be in accordance with the terms of reference received from the Council and from the Assembly of the League of Nations that we should give some indication as to the standards which are to be applied for limitation of armaments of the future high contracting parties. This need not take the form of a separate clause but might be included as a footnote to some clause. In this way, the excellent work of Sub-Commission A, instead of being merely relegated to the dusty shelves of dealers in military curiosities, would become once more a serious, valuable and living work. To proceed in such a way would enable Governments, experts and the public who wait for and judge us to find their way about more easily. Furthermore, last-moment improvisations which might compromise the work of the Conference would be avoided. In conclusion, gentlemen, I desire to wish the Preparatory Commission every success in its work.

M. PAUL-BONCOUR (France). — Gentlemen — Like all of us here, I have many reasons for gratitude towards Viscount Cecil. The first — and it is a reason we can never forget — is that he, with M. Léon Bourgeois and a few others — a very few now — was one of those who first urged the cause of the League of Nations. But I have to-day another reason for gratitude, though perhaps a less weighty one, for, in laying his scheme before you and choosing a method of work which perhaps — nay, certainly — would not have been chosen but for him, he has compelled me to lay my scheme before you too. Thus by making the observations on my scheme which I feel bound to make, I shall necessarily show in what respects — and I am glad to say they are many and far-reaching — he and I hold common views; and I shall also have to speak of the differences which at present separate us, though when I say “at present” I am implying a hope. By adopting this method I may perhaps seem to be criticising Viscount Cecil’s ideas, but really I shall only be commenting on my own scheme.

This scheme is based, as it should be — and as I think any scheme which may emerge from our discussions should do — on Article 8 of the Covenant. We are here in virtue of a pact accepted by all the contracting nations, which have undertaken to consider an international Convention for the limitation and reduction of armaments compatible with the minimum of security required by each State. It seemed to me that, in consequence, Article 8 of the Covenant should form the basis of any international Convention which may be proposed. This brings us at once to a realisation of the seriousness of the task before us. Article 8 is quite clear; it contains a provision which cannot, of course — far from it! — be compared with that which Dante wrote over the portal of his Inferno: “Abandon hope, all ye who enter here!” On the contrary, I think it will free all peoples from a great burden. It is none the less true, however, that, according to Article 8, and during the validity of any Convention that may be adopted, no increases in armaments will be allowed without the consent of the Council. That is the reciprocal undertaking to which we shall all have bound ourselves when the Convention is signed, and it is one which demands careful reflection. But herein lies, too, the ground for the hope which it brings, since, provided there is a minimum of security for every State, the race in armaments will be stopped. My esteemed Roumanian colleague will thus see that he was mistaken when he expressed justly — as regards form, my intention and my scheme itself seemed to disregard the essential and oft-mentioned link between disarmament and security. Time and the length of the text make no difference. And, indeed, even if I had written at greater length, nothing would more clearly attest our community of thought than Article 8 itself, since that article contains the undertaking to which we have subscribed, and which links together the possible limitations of armaments with the degree of national security necessary for each individual State. There can be no possible doubt on that point. The Preamble preceding the French draft is couched, as far as security is concerned, in the briefest and, I think, the clearest possible terms. It is arranged, as it were, on horizontal lines as in ordinary writing. It might have been set out in vertical columns containing a credit and a debit side.

Mr. Gibson once told me in the course of a discussion that I was an impenitent idealist, but he now sees that I am also a business man. Let us examine these debit and credit items. First of all, the credit side. To this account must be set the fact that we are here at all, that a League of Nations exists, and that there is a Covenant which, even when we find it difficult — he often treasures himself — to define, yet precisely in any event imposes undeniable obligations upon us. Let us never forget that fact. And again, within the framework of the Covenant there have been concluded, under the ægis of the League’s international organisation, a number of regional guarantee treaties which must be added to the general and somewhat vague guarantee — and you know that I am not the first to realise its vagueness — which we possess in the Covenant in its present form. I hold the view that by this means conditions...
of security have been improved for at any rate some nations. You will see that the terms are carefully chosen so as to give an objective representation of the facts. I said that their conditions of security are improved. That does not mean the aggregate security; it means that the nations may consider it possible to take what I called in my Preamble the first step on the road towards the introduction of armaments. And since it is the first step, it is necessarily limited and perhaps timid. But if that step can be taken, if there is to be a Convention, no matter what its contents may be, then, by virtue of Article 8, the race in armaments will at once be decisively checked. The first step — however limited, however timid — goes in the liabilities column. I place it there not to disavow it, but to set forth the facts, in order that my balance-sheet shall be correct. The Treaty of Mutual Assistance failed, the Protocol failed — Viscount Cecil will agree that neither he nor I were responsible for that — and, in consequence, it was impossible to bring the necessary precision to the application of Article 26 — the pivot on which the whole international organisation for security turns. Until this degree of precision has been reached, no matter in what form; until the countries can say: "I know that, if I am attacked, the League of Nations will come to my help in so many days," the system which we should like to see you supporting. This is our task, I do not forget it, and if I have not mentioned it in the draft Convention, this is, I repeat, because the happy initiative taken by Viscount Cecil has obliged us to take a similar action and, in submitting a draft Convention which shows both where we agree and where we differ from him, to make the draft we submit similar to his, that is, without figures. This eliminates the criteria which should be used as a basis for such figures — and this will be another part of the task entrusted to the Preparatory Commission by the Council — on that we are entirely agreed — when referred in particular points V and VII of the questionnaire which our technical Commissions have discussed. We shall be obliged, when we settle on the text of the Convention, to show to what extent we are adopting or rejecting the criteria of the technical Commissions. If you see any advantage in including this in the Convention itself, I, for one, will not object.

This is the Preamble. The text of the Convention proper, if you have been good enough to read it, has shown you that the articles of its Chapter I have an importance transcending the special subject with which they deal, that is, the question of effectives. I prefer to put it at the beginning — I might have put it at the end, but I wished to impress it upon you, to make you see at once what I call the system which we should like to see you supporting. In the matter of effectives, we have in our Chapter I stated a number of theses which might equally well be reproduced in all the other parts; that is, that the limitations which an international Convention may lay down can only be applicable to permanent peace armaments, whether we are dealing with effectives, material or expenditure.

This is an essential point in the French draft. We will welcome any enquiry, but, in the present situation and in the present state of the deliberations of our technical Commissions, to which I admit, I refer at every moment, for, as my colleague of Roumania remarked, these are not archive documents but a living instrument of our present deliberations — at the present moment, I do not see how it would be possible to limit the armaments which a country might require if forced to mobilise.

I understand the apprehensions which underlie Viscount Cecil's draft and this conception of the initial attacking power to which he referred on several occasions, and to which he desires us to apply a possible limitation. I tell you quite frankly — and here I must emphasise a second leading principle of our draft — I think that only that which can be controlled can be limited; no less closely connected, in my mind, than are the different forms of armament are the limitations on the possibility of controlling these limitations. I know that on this point I may encounter the very decided opinion of a number of delegations. The first object of our present considerations here is to state in their entirety and in their integrity our individual points of view. Discussion will show how far these can be reconciled, but I want to draw the attention of my colleagues at once to the fact that, seeing that we are working — let us never forget it — under theegis of Article 8, under the sway of the provision which declares that, the moment the Convention is adopted, no increase in armaments may take place without the consent of the Council, the Council cannot, in so grave, so fundamental a question, take the responsibility of accepting or refusing, without first of all making sure of the means of verifying the facts.
Where permanent peace armaments are concerned this is possible, and I might even say — given some mutual confidence — easy. If we are dealing with everything that a country proposes to put into the field when events force it to pass from a peace to a war footing, however, or — to use a word which has a meaning for everybody — to mobilise the sum total of these events, the sum total of these factors, will be such that the country’s desire to make the utmost use of them will be so much the keener in proportion as its desire for peace had been more sincere and confirmed and expressed in the diminutions and reductions which it had made in its effective and permanent material in times of peace. I believe it to be impossible, therefore, to suggest here any means and methods by which, at such a moment, that country might be prevented from putting into the field all the forces it could muster. For after all, gentlemen, how can we reach our goal with the precision and certitude which are indispensable in such matters? This is not a case in which we can play with words and declare ourselves satisfied with enunciating certain general ideas; we have to see how we can try to know what can be put into the field within a given period. The enquiry is a tempting one, but its practicability depends on such factors that to assure it we should need a permanent, an incessant supervision exercised by one nation over another — such a supervision as, in the present state of things, no nation would endure when it came to the point. We want to know, for example, the number of reservists which could be employed within a given time. But this depends on what instruction it has been possible to give them after their release from service with the colours. We should have to go into the question as to whether the reservists in question were not being trained. And then, in those abominable modern wars, the question of material governs the employment of men. In modern armies, where effective are so numerous, what limits their employment is the limitation of the possibility of arming them. To know the number of men which a country might employ during the first days of mobilisation, we should have to know what stocks of material it has accumulated. We shall see in a minute that there are direct limitations which are practicable, and which are laid down in definite fashion by the French draft. And you see that it is never possible to abandon this clear and simple point of view which has been that of all efforts and all conferences which have attempted the limitation of armaments: facility, practicability, lucidity, certitude and, consequently, mutual confidence, when we are dealing with visible and permanent peace armaments, contrasted with the impossibility of knowing the sum total of forces and elements which might be brought into play on the day of mobilisation. We should have to look for all the elements of resistance of a country. Further, there are not only the men — there is also the material. There is, for example, the merchant marine which can be transformed into auxiliary cruisers. Are you then going to limit the number of these great vessels, the factors which work the more speedily the more modern their equipment? Are you going to limit the industrial power of a country? And what country could accept that?

At the same time, it is impossible (we are all agreed on that) to limit all that we call “war potential” — the term which has finally emerged out of many discussions. Let us, then, not condemn the Conference to certain failure by attempting to limit a few, and only a few, of the elements which compose this war potential, for you will soon be asked from other quarters to limit other factors, which will not be susceptible of limitation, and we shall end, after innumerable deliberations, in certain failure.

Gentlemen, let us be content — the task is delicate enough — with limiting what can be limited because it can be seen and supervised. This has always been the aim of every Conference on the limitation or reduction of armaments. It is peace-time armaments which really constitute the burden of armaments, which impose the heaviest charge on budgets and force States to devote an important part of their budgets to non-productive ends instead of consecrating it to productive ends, to social ends, to living ends. This is the load from which the nations would free themselves, this is their deep aspiration, this is what they hope that our efforts will give them. It is the case that these armaments too that acts of immediate aggression are committed, which give rise to events which square the League of Nations faced with a state of things which it will no longer be able to remedy. This is the point at which I mention that the only practical action possible, to which, therefore, we ought to devote ourselves, is the limitation of permanent peace-time armaments; and at which, at the same time, I fully realise that the fact that armaments are available on mobilisation involves potentialities of war. But at that point, at that precise point, the French draft introduces the principle — the essential principle, in my mind — which the existence of the League of Nations involves.

War — it is the task of the League of Nations to avert it. Mobilisation — it is the task of the League of Nations to make it futile, by taking the decisions which it is its duty to take in time, and with the necessary speed, with the necessary authority, and without respect of Powers, whether they be great or small.

No limitation of armaments is conceivable if this factor is left out of account. On the one hand there is peace-time, which involves the existence of barracks, ships, permanent armaments — in a word, the burden of armed peace, which to-morrow will change, if we do not succeed in our task, into a new race for armaments. On the other hand there is the state of war, with mobilisation, the utility of which depends on the authority and rapidity of the body under whose auspices we are now debating. Accordingly, the French draft, while asserting the impossibility of limiting the ultimate armaments which may result from mobilisation, asks States to pledge themselves not to take any measure of this kind without the knowledge of the League of Nations.

It will not suffice for this organism must not only be notified when the mobilisation notices are posted on the hoardings of a country; when this moment comes, everyone knows
that a country has passed from a state of peace to a state of war; the fact is patent to all the world. I refer here to the measures preparatory to this mobilisation; such measures must not be taken without the League of Nations being notified. It will then be for the League to determine whether it has the power to prevent war.

This is the first object, and the second, therefore, is the limitation of permanent armaments in time of peace. Chapter I deals with the limitation of effective forces and consequently also with the publicity given to this limitation. I wish to point out at the outset that each of the chapters of the French draft, after stating the limitation necessary, provides for publicity by means of tables. The form of these tables may vary according to the decisions of the Conference. I have given you here a simple illustration to show you that it is quite possible to indicate clearly the effective forces required by each country for its national security. I conceive these tables as being sufficiently explicit to preclude the possibility of evasion or concealment — I ought to apologise for speaking of evasion and concealment. I know that it is customary — even in these questions — to say that the honour and good faith of countries are sufficient and that it is not necessary to take so many precautions. But, my dear colleagues, if public law had reached the same point as private law, if nations had observed among themselves the rules which are observed by nearly all civilised peoples, our task would not be such a big one; we should not have been here for so long and should not still have to remain here so long... if we are to believe the predictions which we heard just now.

We are here in fact to build up public law, to construct an international organism which will be the Permanent Disarmament Commission. If we want mutual confidence, we must seek methods of allowing us to have a clear view of each other. The tables provided for in the French draft will allow this to be done. Of course, improvements may be suggested; but these tables prove that it will be possible to obtain all the publicity desirable.

The same reflections may be made as regards material, in connection with which there arises, however, the question of budget expenditure. In this respect, the French draft has made a definite choice among the various forms of limitation. That which I suggest appears to me to be the best. Of course, better tables will be raised, particularly the irrefutable one that expenses incurred in respect of the armaments of a country develop to an excessive extent and cannot be compared. I agree: a professional army evidently costs more than a conscript army. But, in this respect as in others, limitation does not mean uniformity. This is one of the factors which will be duly weighed in judging the figures. A country which has a professional army will have to provide for greater expenditure in its budget in proportion to the effective of its army than a country which has a conscript army. But, for allowing for this, the limitation of budget expenditure is, in my opinion, one of the most important questions which the Conference we preparing have to discuss. Moreover, there is one way of compensating in part for the differences resulting from the unequal expenditure involved by the different forms of armies. Chapter II of our object will be to special chapter. In my opinion, this is the only possible procedure unless we have supervision, a solution to which I am opposed, for I know that even the system I am proposing will give rise to many objections. It is the only way of securing a limitation of material in reserve, and thereby of the possibility of using reserves, through the limitation of budget expenditure. In this way, it will be made impossible to accumulate in advance an excessive quantity of material, and States will thus be prevented from engaging too rapidly in operations which the League of Nations will be unable to control.

The big question of material includes a second chapter, which will, I know, give rise to great difficulties — I refer to naval material. Here the situation takes on a different aspect; it is the material itself which is of primary importance. It is on the limitation of this material — which is expressed in tons — that part of our discussions will bear, for it is to this point that part of our differences refer.

Total tonnage? Tonnage by classes? The question is a vital one. With your permission, gentlemen, I shall not embark upon a discussion of this question, which would be premature. It is enough to inform you — if you are not already aware of the fact — that here there is a profound difference of opinion, with regard to which serious efforts at conciliation will have to be made.

The air arm is the last category of this sum total of armaments which the French delegation declares, as it has always declared, to be indissolubly linked. This is indeed a principle which has been universally recognised; it is a point which may be taken as settled; it has been frequently discussed in the technical Commissions, and it is a point with regard to which discussion has been proved to be of some value.

The question of aviation is perhaps the most difficult to solve. As I said just now — and I maintain the assertion — it is very easy to convert commercial vessels rapidly into auxiliary cruisers. But it is still easier to convert a civil aeroplane into a military aeroplane. We are agreed, however, that it is impossible to limit the industrial forces of a country, although these forces are easily utilised in time of war. This is one of the chief factors of the war potential of a country. Let us therefore have the humility to recognise, when we encounter almost insurmountable difficulties, that, whatever we may do in the sphere of air armaments, we shall not have accomplished much and that there will always be inequality between the civil aviation of the different countries.

In this connection, the French draft contains a clause under which the intervention of the Permanent Disarmament Commission may be called for if at any time the civil aeronautics of a country develop to an excessive extent and give ground for the belief that the general clauses of the Convention are being violated, even indirectly.

The organism which would be called upon would be the Permanent Disarmament Commission. I am aware that on this point there are profound differences of opinion.
read last week the memorandum of the United States and I know that this is one of the points on which it did not agree.

My dear colleague, you are very ungrateful. It is chiefly out of consideration for you Americans that the French draft has provided for this Permanent Commission. It was to make things easier for you, because we attach great importance to your help. If we do not tell you so more often, it is for fear of being indiscreet; and we do our best by various devices and concessions to bring you into the general atmosphere of the League of Nations without obliging you to take the step which we so discreetly but ardently desire. If there had been no America, I am not sure, to speak quite frankly, that I should have thought of this special Commission. The League of Nations possesses exceedingly important organisations, and it is always well, I think, although this may sound very conservative, to continue to make use of that which exists rather than to be constantly changing. The League, I think, has organisations which would have no difficulty in adapting and accommodating themselves to the new duties which I foresee arising from the supervision that I shall be defining in a moment.

The Council itself, occupied with more strictly political duties, but assisted by the Committee of the Council, which, in circumstances familiar to all of us, has furnished excellent results, is able to reconcile these political activities and its high authority with certain practical preoccupations by appointing to this Committee of the Council men more particularly entrusted with certain problems.

The Permanent Advisory Commission itself constitutes a body of well-qualified experts, but, in order to have America, I said to myself, "Let us create a new body", and now America replies in her memorandum, "For goodness' sake, not that!".

Very well, gentlemen, we will examine this problem and try and find an acceptable form.

I have spoken perfectly frankly, but this brutal frankness must not lead you to suppose that I am not ready to seek any form of conciliation possible. At the same time, the best means of coming to an agreement is to know exactly what we want and for everyone to know what everybody else wants. Let us therefore seek the form we want. Whatever the form, however, the essential thing in the Convention and in the Conference which we are preparing for is, in my opinion, that we should succeed. The League of Nations is playing for high stakes and we must help it to win. One of the biggest factors is the permanent result, in one form or another. We are all agreed that it will only be a first step. It will be a short and hesitating step, but, in order to prepare for further steps, it is important that there should exist some record of our experiences. People laugh at our slow progress, and will continue to do so. They do not realise that we have undertaken a task which has never before been attempted. We therefore have to create our own method. Not only are we applying our intelligence to a new problem, but our intelligence has to create instruments for its own use.

When once the Conference is in being, and there is a permanent organisation for the purpose of applying a convention, under whatever form and name, we shall have accomplished the first and most important step.

What will be its powers? Whether it is this Commission which we are now considering, or whether it is the Council or the Committee of the Council itself, assisted by experts not only military but economic, and with social qualifications enabling them to grasp the whole complexity of the problem, what will be the functions of this organism? It will have one function which should present no real difficulty to anyone, that of recording and co-ordinating. That, surely, cannot be prejudicial in any way to national sovereignty or even to national prestige. We are agreed that limitation implies publicity. There will therefore be tables; there must exist somewhere and will have to be looked at for purposes of comparison. There also will have to be reports to show the progress made in the limitation and reduction of armaments. These and these concrete results will serve as a basis for further work.

The second step, gentlemen, comes the second step — a still more delicate matter, but surely indispensable. Some nations will think, rightly or wrongly, that the Convention is not being strictly observed. If you do not allow the organisation — I choose this abstract word so as not to compel the Preparatory Commission to abide by the form selected by the French delegation as an embodiment of its ideas — if you do not allow this organisation, whatever it may be, to undertake the necessary investigations, do you not realise how you will poison the relations even of the contracting States if there is no means of solving the difficulty, of removing the fears, which in many cases will, I am sure, be groundless, that facts are being concealed — and these can only be brought to light by an investigation, since we must call things by their names. Do you not feel that, on the contrary, you will have created a state of mistrust and that, in the absence of detailed information and with a prevailing impression that the Convention is not being scrupulously applied in one quarter or another, other parties will be tempted to embark on the same course? Steps of this kind are taken because of the belief that others are taking them, and thus one step follows another, until some day, war breaks out, when it is too late to act.

Gentlemen, I will ask you, with the discretion that is called for in the discussion of these big principles, which frequently correspond not so much to facts as to certain traditions of which we do not realise the weight, even though we feel their force — I will ask you to consider this point. An international convention for disarmament or the reduction of armaments would leave in the minds of the contracting nations a feeling of mistrust, of menace, anxiety and nervous tension, if provision were not made for the necessary investigations, I do not say at every turn or on every occasion — it would be for the organisation entrusted with these investigations to give the necessary guarantees.
Gentlemen, I can only speak on behalf of my own country. In this matter I may state that my country accepts in advance all forms of supervision and will not regard its dignity as in any way impaired or diminished because an international body is authorised to come and ascertain whether it is fulfilling a Convention which it has signed. When supervision is exercised under other conditions, when it is undertaken by the victors over the vanquished as the result of a war, I can quite understand the feeling that is aroused; but when the investigations are made by an international body of which one is oneself a member, the situation seems to me to be entirely different. If we wish the League atmosphere to be a living reality, if we wish the principles upon which it is based to be vital and real, we must be sufficiently international to understand that this supervision is the inevitable outcome of a bona-fide Convention.

The Commission rose at 5:15 p.m.

FOURTH PUBLIC MEETING.

Held at Geneva on Thursday, March 24th, 1927, at 10.30 a.m.

President: M. LOUDON (Netherlands).

5. General Discussion (Continuation).

The President. — M. Dendramis, representative of the Greek Government, which, as you are aware, is not a member of our Commission but which submitted in May 1926 a memorandum, has requested me to allow him to make a short statement. I feel sure all the members will agree to allow M. Dendramis to speak.

M. DENDRAMIS (Greece). — Mr. President, gentlemen — The Greek Government, desirous of bringing its modest contribution to the efforts of the League of Nations with a view to disarmament, and of asserting its solidarity with all civilised nations in favour of joint action undertaken with the object of consolidating peace, requested me to submit to you on May 26th, 1926, a memorandum to which I ventured to attach a few remarks, the spirit of which you were good enough to appreciate. The French and British draft Conventions having been submitted, I would like to state the views of my country.

We are glad to say that it is no longer the question of the possibility of being able to disarm that is being discussed at Geneva, but rather the way in which it can be done.

The Greek Government, which is earnestly desirous of ensuring that the crushing burden which rests upon the Greek people as well as upon all other nations should be lightened, is ready to subscribe to a scheme of general disarmament provided a complete plan of military, financial and economic assistance to be supplied by the League of Nations to the State attacked is laid down beforehand. The Greek Government is entirely in favour of the proposal submitted by M. Erich of the Finnish delegation; it considers that it will be necessary to lay down in full detail the procedure which will enable the League of Nations to intervene as speedily as possible in the event of a conflict arising, and to organise the immediate enforcement of its decisions and the bringing into operation of its means of action. Progressive disarmament must logically depend upon the value of the guarantees for security which are obtained, and the war potential of each State will have to be taken into account. If we desire that the Disarmament Conference shall succeed and that the efforts of the League of Nations to that consolidation of peace will not be doomed to failure, we must stress the fact that the mos serious point of the discussion is the circumstance that any reduction of armaments must be counterbalanced by a better guarantee of the security of countries, and that all countries are determined to develop their action within the international framework set up by the Treaties.

Viscount Cecil rightly said that public opinion, the support of which the League of Nations should seek, is necessary to instil into the minds of the peoples the idea that armaments are a burden of which they should be relieved. We believe that the more you develop the feeling of security the more you will strengthen public opinion and enable it to influence the minds of the peoples. We think it is necessary to bear in mind the special position of each country and to determine beforehand the time-limit within which the armed force sent for the purpose of preventing the special and general damage which an attacked State may suffer during invasion should arrive on the scene of aggression. Greece considers that, as regards the reduction of armaments, the effective and armaments that each country shall be authorised to maintain should be such as to enable it, in the event of aggression, to resist at least for twenty-four hours, until such time as the other Members
of the League of Nations can intervene. By setting up this principle and by defining, by
means of a swift and effective procedure, the military, financial and economic assistance of
the League in the event of aggression, you will give the States the guarantee that they will
no longer have to fear aggression of any kind and that they will no longer be in danger of
seeing part of their territory invaded and occupied before they can obtain the necessary
assistance to release it.

In spite of her somewhat unfavourable geographical condition, in spite of the great
extension of her frontiers and coast-line, in spite of the special military situation which has
arisen owing to practically the complete loss of her war material during the last campaign in
Asia Minor, Greece has reduced the number of its cadres and units and has reduced the
duration of military service. She would be prepared to consent to further reduction in
her armaments if such reduction were general for all countries and if it were counterbalanced
by a better guarantee with regard to security. As regards percentage reduction in the
armaments of each State, Greece contends that account should be taken of the geographical
position of each country, the extent, nature and vulnerability of its frontiers, its national
wealth as regards raw material and as regards facilities for the manufacture of war material
in comparison with that of the neighbouring States.

In conclusion, I thank the President and the Commission for having been good enough
to hear me.

M. HENNINGS (Sweden). — The Swedish delegation did not consider it necessary to
take part in the discussion so long as that discussion was a general discussion. The Swedish
degulation felt it might refrain from expressing any views, especially as the sincere desire of
the Swedish Government that the present session of the Preparatory Commission shall
reach practical and tangible results. It is well known, that is to say, that the present session
shall lead to the drafting of a Convention for the purpose of effectively reducing and limiting
military, naval and air armaments in the various countries. Now, however, the Preparatory
Commission has before it two definite drafts of such a Convention, drafts which are the
outcome of very thorough and detailed work to which I venture respectfully to pay a sincere
tribute. Now that the discussion will deal more directly with the purposes in view, the
Swedish delegation considers that the time has come to submit a few observations with regard
to the very difficult and intricate questions before us. The Swedish delegation fully realises
that the Convention, which is the object and purpose of our work, can only be a first step
towards a more complete reduction of armaments, as the latter can only be achieved when the
political circumstances are more suitable than those which prevail to-day and that consequently
this first Convention can, from the point of view of disarmament, only lead to limited results.

Having said this, the Swedish delegation desires to lay stress on the fact that it seems to
it of vital importance that from the very outset the Convention in question should be so
framed as to provide a fair and equitable foundation upon which future work for subsequent
and further reduction in the armed forces could be carried on, and that it should thus make it
possible for this work to be put into concrete form in a more effective Convention.

Taking this as a starting-point, the Swedish delegation considers that the Convention
which has to be framed here should, as far as possible, cover all the essential items of peace-
time armaments, it being clearly understood that the reduction to be applied to each of these
items can only be limited in scope in the first Convention, because, if certain important items
of armaments are not considered and if the Convention only applies to certain other of these
items, there will be some risk that competition in armaments which has been limited and
stopped up to this point in armaments which has been limited and stopped will now be
concentrated on other items not covered by the Convention, and that the Convention will thus not achieve its purpose. That,
in the view of the Swedish delegation, is a contingency which we should do our utmost to
avoid.

With regard to the two draft Conventions which are before the Preparatory Commission
and which have been submitted by the eminent delegates of Great Britain and France, the
Swedish delegation is of opinion, without being in a position at the present time to express
its views with regard to the details, that they afford extremely valuable material for the work
of this Commission. The Swedish delegation, which did not consider it expedient to submit
itself a complete draft Convention, is therefore of opinion that the above-mentioned drafts
can suitably be used as a basis of discussion, it being clearly understood, however, that each
debate shall be entitled during the discussions held in this Commission to submit amend-
ments on those points which, in its view, should be amended or modified. At the same time, the
Swedish delegation has considered it desirable to set forth immediately, on the basis of the
principles above enunciated, certain observations concerning the various items of land, naval
and air armaments which in its view should enter into account. Needless to say, the Swedish
degulation reserves the right to elaborate these remarks at a later stage when the main points
of the complete drafts clause by clause is undertaken. I shall therefore confine myself
to-day to submitting a brief review of the principal military, naval and air items to which, in
the view of the Swedish delegation, the Convention should apply. As regards the reasons
for these suggestions, I would refer to the statements which have already been made in Sub-
Commission A by the Swedish delegation.

With regard to land armaments, according to the principles which have been set forth
above, the Swedish delegation considers that a reduction, if it is to be effective, should cover
all the large categories of armaments which are in existence and are prepared in time of peace
and which can consequently be employed immediately for the purpose of aggression. It
bases this opinion upon the fact, among others, that it would appear that no country is likely
to take the risk of undertaking aggression and of starting a war with only the forces which happened to be with the colours at the time.

With regard to personnel, the reduction should therefore apply to the number of effectives with the colours in time of peace, but this reduction should be so effected that it would at the same time involve a corresponding reduction of trained reserves, forces which are also available for aggression. In order to achieve this, the Swedish delegation wonders whether it would not be necessary to apply different methods according to whether an army was a conscript army or a voluntary army. The Swedish delegation considers further that any reduction in personnel should be effected by direct methods, and not by way of budgetary limitation. In order to reduce as far as possible all means of aggression, it seems, moreover, of capital importance that a reduction of personnel should be supplemented by a reduction of arms and ammunition in use and in stock. Such a form of reduction seems necessary if the limitation and reduction of effectives with the colours is not carried out in such a manner as to involve at the same time the indirect limitation of trained reserves. It seems preferable that the reduction of material should be carried out by direct methods, which could, if necessary, be supplemented by budgetary limitation.

With regard to naval armaments, the Swedish delegation considers that the Convention would not be complete if the reduction and limitation did not bear upon the following items: tonnage, material other than tonnage, and personnel. The Swedish delegation considers that in principle the reduction and limitation of tonnage should be carried out according to the method of total tonnage. This method should, in the view of the Swedish delegation, be supplemented in the case of large navies having a large number of ships of a similar type, by the application to such navies of the so-called limitation-by-classes method, and that it should be further supplemented for all navies by a notification published beforehand and for a determined period of their programmes of naval shipbuilding.

With regard to personnel, the reduction and limitation might be carried out by establishing a certain ratio between the effectives of the navy and the tonnage.

With regard to air armaments, the Swedish delegation, taking the view that the legitimate development of civil aviation should in no case be hampered, considers, therefore, that military aviation should alone be subjected to reduction and limitation. It seems desirable that the limitation in this case should apply to the number, the engine power and possibly also the lift tonnage of all forms of aircraft in service in the first line and in reserve, and that it should also apply to personnel.

I have ventured to make a brief statement of the various military, naval and air factors to which, in the opinion of the Swedish delegation, a first Convention should apply. As regards other factors of limitation which should appear in such a Convention — for instance, those concerning the exchange of information, supervision, ratification, etc. — it seems to the Swedish delegation desirable to postpone remarks on those points until such time as the purpose and scope of the Convention has been definitely decided.

Before concluding, Mr. President, I should like respectfully to make a suggestion with regard to the procedure to be followed. We now have before us two complete drafts. Certain speakers have also made definite suggestions, and other speakers are possibly about to do the same. In the circumstances, it would seem to me that it would be a great advantage if the Bureau of the Preparatory Commission (that is, the honourable delegates of the Netherlands, Czechoslovakia and Belgium) would undertake to prepare a comparative table of the drafts and suggestions by placing systematically together the clauses which have reference to one and the same subject — a table, that is, which would set forth the various proposals and suggestions made, and which could be employed as a direct basis of discussion. I am convinced that such a document would greatly facilitate discussion, because it would enable us separately and systematically to compare all the questions before us, and to take into account all the opinions which have been submitted. I should like to add, Mr. President, that, in making this suggestion, my idea is merely to facilitate the work of our Commission as far as possible.

M. RUTGERS (Netherlands). — The Netherlands delegation desires wholeheartedly to associate itself with the tribute which has been paid to Viscount Cecil for the valuable initiative he has taken, which will appreciably carry forward the work of our Commission. It desires also to pay a sincere tribute to M. Paul-Boncour, who, notwithstanding certain hesitations, finally adopted Viscount Cecil's method of procedure, and put the ideas of the French delegation into the concrete form of a draft. Thanks to the action thus taken, it will be possible for us to proceed forthwith to a discussion which will not turn on mere vague forms of words but which will bear directly on the main issue, the necessary details of the questions which will have to be settled. At the same time, it will not be necessary for us to go over again all the work which has been so admirably carried out by Sub-Commissions A and B of our Commission and the bodies working under them.

The Netherlands delegation desires to contribute so far as it can towards the result which the whole world may rightly expect from our work. It takes as the point of departure replies upon which our Sub-Commissions quite agree and the statements made in Sub-Commission A by the Netherlands delegates — statements which, in a general way, followed the lines of the statement just made by the Swedish delegation — but it has no intention of taking up a rigid attitude in this manner with regard to the proposals which Viscount Cecil and M. Paul-Boncour have submitted to us. On the contrary, it is ready to make concessions, if these are necessary, in order to carry our work to a successful conclusion. In the event of our asking for information regarding the details of the drafts submitted to us, and in the event of subsequent consideration of these drafts leading us to propose amendments with the
idea of obtaining more detail or obtaining modifications in the drafts on certain points, we shall always do this in a spirit of co-operation and compromise in order to ensure the result which we all ardently desire.

M. Sokal (Poland).—After consulting several of my colleagues, I have a proposal to make with regard to the question of procedure. It seems quite practicable that we should, during the general discussion which is going on this morning, at the same time lay down the procedure to be followed, and the proposal which I had in mind was exactly the same as that which has just been made by the honourable representative of Sweden. We have before us two separate drafts, one submitted by the British delegation and the other submitted by the French delegation, and possibly we shall have certain proposals by other delegates with regard to individual clauses. I therefore wonder whether the best method of procedure would not be to ask the Bureau of our Commission to examine the two drafts, because it is probable that they are not constructed on the same lines, and, having done that, to co-ordinate them—that is, to set out in parallel fashion the views of the British and French delegations on each individual point. The Bureau might like at the same time to hear the other suggestions which other delegates who have not submitted drafts might like to make on various points. Having done this, the Bureau could then submit to us not a single draft but two co-ordinated drafts, and I think this would enable us to undertake our discussion more speedily and more systematically. Without such preparatory work it will be difficult, I think, for us to engage on a detailed discussion of the various chapters and articles of the drafts.

Mr. Chao-Hsin Chu (China).—I wish to make known to this Commission and to the public China’s point of view on the question of disarmament. China is a large country, almost as large as all the countries in Europe put together. She is a continental country, yet she possesses a very long coast-line. Therefore she requires air and land forces as well as a navy for her protection.

The Press has reported that China has to-day the largest land force in the world. Let me explain that China is now in a transitional period and, when her political differences are adjusted and the unification of the whole country is attained, she will certainly reorganise her army and will disband any troops that are really superfluous. It is very necessary for China to maintain her land armaments in an efficient state both for national defence as well as for domestic security, in proportion to her magnificent geographical position and her numerous population, which amounts to a quarter of the total population of the world.

The air force in China is still in its infancy. We deem it a necessity for China to develop her air armaments on a larger scale for civilian and military services. China has now a very small navy, and we must reserve the right to build up in the near future naval armaments according to the needs of protecting our coasts.

All that I have stated is on a very reasonable basis and I am sure that the future programme of our land, air and naval armaments will not go beyond the principle laid down in the present draft Convention.

China agrees to any scheme of general disarmament or even total disarmament should all the nations decide so to do. Armaments lead to temptation. History tells us that no war has ever been started by an unarmed nation. If we sincerely aim at permanent peace, let us be so far idealists that we work out a scheme of disarming the whole world, not merely limiting arms but totally abolishing arms.

About two thousand years ago, an Emperor in China carried out a programme of disarming his whole country. He ordered the collection of all arms owned by his subjects and put them in a large melting-pot, turning the metals into statues for the decoration of his palace. The downfall of his dynasty was due to his tyranny and absolutism, not to his scheme of total disarmament, which we consider to-day an excellent one when we get tired of wars.

Should my idealist talk convince all my colleagues and should all the nations agree to sink their warships to the bottom of the ocean and destroy their arms and ammunition in a melting-pot, there would be no more distinction between the so-called “strong” and “weak” nations. Let us all look to that day when military Powers disappear and only economic Powers are counted.

M. Yovanovitch (Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes).—After the very eloquent speech of M. Paul-Boncour, in which he set forth in a masterly manner the ideas which guided the French delegation in preparing its draft, it remains but for me to state, on behalf of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, that I am practically in entire agreement with that draft. The few apprehensions which I had in reading the draft he has dispelled, and I was particularly glad to note that the draft submitted by M. Paul-Boncour took account in so large a measure of the question of security of countries, a question which, in our opinion, should form the basis for determining the limitation of armaments. “Progressive disarmament should follow on progressive security” — these were the words used by M. Paul-Boncour in his report to the Seventh Assembly. That also is our opinion and, if the Agreement concluded at Locarno has had the result of progressive security in one part of Europe, the part of Europe in which my country is situated has not as yet benefited therefrom. Therefore we are in a very special position in that connection. We are convinced that all our work would be futile and doomed to failure if we did not take due account of the close connection between limitation and reduction of armaments and existing conditions with regard to general and regional security. If there is one country which should without hesitation substitute the security which it finds in its own forces for that which it will obtain from the League of Nations, on the sole condition that such security should be reliable and effective, that country is certainly
the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. M. Paul-Boncour's draft has also another very definite merit and that is that, although complicated in appearance, it is constructive and practicable. It confines itself to limiting what is limitable and what can be supervised, and leaves the rest to national resources. In the case of effective armies, consider any limitation other than that of effective men with the colours or in formations organised on a military basis. That limitation in itself would indirectly affect the limitation of effective men which would be called to the colours in the event of mobilisation.

As regards the limitation of air material, I shall probably take the opportunity on subsequent discussions to submit certain more detailed observations, but I wish to lay stress at once on the fact that a country which has no civil aviation, or practically no civil aviation, would scarcely be able to accept the rules of limitation laid down in the French draft without certain reservations. This applies to my country, and our circumstances in this connection are very special, not only because we have no civil aviation but also because the geographical and economic situations make the development of aviation in the future a matter of very great doubt.

As regards the limitation of naval material, our delegation is in entire agreement with the French draft. It lays down that such a limitation shall be applied to total tonnage and not to tonnage by classes. It seems to me that it would be highly unfair to impose a rule of limitation by tonnage by classes to States the navies of which have only a very small total tonnage but have at the same time to defend their coasts.

As for the limitation of expenditure, I can very naturally subscribe to the proposal which applies to the maintenance of effective armies, but I shall have certain observations to make regarding expenditure on material, because, after the war, my country had not only to restore its whole national defence material but to build it up from the beginning, and this work has not yet been completed. We have not, therefore, been endeavouring to undertake competition in armaments, but it is necessary for us to build up the requisite material for national defence. I also subscribe to the proposal for permanent supervision, and if I had any doubts on the subject these doubts have been entirely dispelled by the eloquent remarks of M. Paul-Boncour. We willingly accept such supervision, especially as it would be general, and my country has hitherto always declared its readiness to agree that its good faith and genuineness should be tested by international and impartial enquiries.

To sum up, gentlemen, notwithstanding the two reservations which I have been bound to make with regard to the draft of M. Paul-Boncour, I can give you my assurance that we shall co-operate fully and genuinely in the work of this Commission, and that we desire to achieve practical and constructive results. That is one of the reasons why we support the French draft Convention, because we see in that draft a basis which will enable us to achieve the practical results at which we are all aiming. We think these results would only be a first stage of progress, but at the same time would constitute a very important step forward towards the final goal to which our efforts are tending, a step the moral consequences of which will make their beneficial effects felt in all countries, and will make it possible subsequently to advance more rapidly and more certainly.

Before concluding, I should like to pay a tribute to Viscount Cecil for having, by submitting his draft, directed our work along lines which will certainly lead us to practical results. If in my statement I have specially dealt with the French draft Convention, it is merely because that draft takes account in a larger measure of the views of my country, which have already been expressed on several occasions. In conclusion, I express my agreement with the proposal regarding procedure put forward by the delegates for Sweden and Poland.

M. VEVERKA (Czechoslovakia). — Mr. President and gentlemen — The Commission, having already agreed that the purpose of our discussions will be the preparation of a draft Convention, it is perhaps hardly necessary for me to set forth in detail the general point of view of the Czechoslovak Government on the question of disarmament, the more so as, in reiterating all these various ideas, I should simply be repeating what has already been so forcibly and so clearly expressed by my colleagues of the Little Entente and of Poland. I shall therefore confine myself to noting that, since the last meeting of our Commission, our point of view has in no way changed, especially as regards the question of the interdependence between disarmament and security, and I am particularly glad to note that the declaration made yesterday by M. Paul-Boncour and the Preamble which has been submitted to us by Viscount Cecil take account of these views, and that the point of view of the Czechoslovak Government is corroborated therein.

But what pleases me even more, and must also please all those who desire the full success of our meeting, is the fact that a preliminary agreement has just been reached between the two authors of the proposals, at any rate, with regard to the purpose to be achieved in the first step towards the limitation and reduction of armaments, for, in reading the Preamble by Viscount Cecil and listening to the speech by M. Paul-Boncour, it is clearly evident that the two delegates making proposals desire to deprive national armies of their power of aggression whilst allowing them to retain their power of defence. This fundamental agreement having now been established, and in view of the obvious desire of all of us to obtain results, I cannot believe that there is any insuperable obstacle to drafting the stipulations of a Convention which would effectively achieve this purpose.

I do not wish to conclude without declaring that the Czechoslovak Government is also ready to accept any form of supervision and of administration of the Convention which the Commission may consider necessary to ensure the appropriate working of the Convention to be concluded. Having said this, I should like to allude to another point which is common to the two drafts. You will doubtless have noticed, gentlemen, that the two texts start off
in the first clause from the hypothesis that the Convention will merely lay down the obligation not to increase armaments above figures to be fixed in the annexed tables but that the question how and by what criteria the maximum is to be fixed for each contracting party will be reserved for the Conference itself. As I am very anxious for the success of the Conference, I consider it desirable that this Convention should reserve the right to proceed, after having drafted the text of the Convention, to set forth the essential criteria according to which the States would, when the appropriate time came, estimate their legitimate armaments. Similarly, and I venture here to make a definite proposal, it would be equally desirable, in order to meet the legitimate apprehensions which might obviously be felt by certain delegations, to place clearly and definitely on record — for preference, by means of a resolution of this Commission — the fact that the contracting States remain in the last resort the judges of the degree of maximum limitation, and will be entitled to take account especially of considerations of their general and regional security.

I leave it to the Commission to judge whether it considers it desirable to take my suggestion into consideration immediately, or whether it prefers to hold the matter over until we come to the special consideration of Article 1 of the drafts before us.

M. DE BROUCKÈRE (Belgium). — Mr. President, gentlemen — We have before us two draft Conventions, the great merit of which is that they very largely define the scope of our discussion.

We have listened to two statements that have made a deep impression on us. The least that can be said of them is that they show how clearly the authors of the proposals discern the problems with which we have to deal and how fully they are aware of the responsibility which rests upon us. We have also heard the statements made on behalf of their Governments by the delegates present here.

It would seem that the time is approaching — some of us may even think that it has come — when we should make use of the whole of the material at our disposal. For my part, sir, I venture to say that I am anxious to begin this work as soon as possible — to begin it now. But perhaps I too may be allowed to follow the example of most of my colleagues and to make at the outset a short statement on behalf of my Government.

Ours is a small and industrious country which is dominated by two passions, the love of freedom and the love of peace.

It is resolved to maintain and to defend this freedom so long as it is exposed to any danger whatsoever, and I need not tell you, gentlemen, that I share your view and hold that the problem of disarmament is intimately connected with the problem of security.

Ours is a peace-loving country, as indeed all other countries are. But we have a special reason for desiring peace; we have a population of eight millions crowded in a small territory, and we cannot live or supply ourselves with bread unless we export the products of our industries to every part of the world. We can only live in a world which is untroubled, which is at work, in which conditions are stable — in brief, in a world where peace reigns. No people can say with more conviction than ours that the problem of peace is for it a question of bread. On every page in our history we find the same lesson. When the peace of Europe is secure, we are prosperous, abundantly prosperous, and our freedom develops. Whenever peace is threatened, whenever nations are struggling with each other, we are economically ruined, and our territory is invaded without warning. I need only say that for us disarmament, which is a condition of lasting peace, is also a condition of life, and that we have the same faith in disarmament as we have in life. Our faith in disarmament is not sterile and dead; it is a living faith which moves us to action. Gentlemen, I do not think I can prove this better than by trying to start work at once, and bringing my preamble to a close at this point.

I said a moment ago that we had a mass of material at our disposal, and that we now have to make use of it. The only difficulty is to know where we should begin. The material is collected there, as it were in the enclosures of a labyrinth, where we may easily find our way provided we have the clue. But it must be found. The question of procedure will be difficult to settle. Many of my colleagues have already attempted to do so, and I believe they have found the right means.

But the question may be more complicated than it appears to be at first sight, and, before accepting their proposals, with perhaps a few slight amendments, I should like to point out the difficulties, to define clearly the problem of procedure with which we are faced, and to find, if possible, the end of the thread which is to guide us.

We are faced with a complicated problem — one might even describe it as confused. It is a singularly vast problem which, as M. Sokal reminded us the other day, indeed covers every aspect of the League of Nations’ activities. There is financial disarmament, there is economic disarmament, there is moral disarmament. The disarmament which we wish to secure is only conceivable as a function of all these different forms. But we shall not review them all. The problem we have to solve falls within narrower limits; we have only to consider military disarmament and such questions as are so closely connected with it that they cannot be separated. Even then the problem is vast enough.

It has been repeatedly stated that we are about to draw up a preliminary Convention. I shall try to bear this in mind throughout my speech.

I do not wish to mention here every form of disarmament, neither the military disarmament which I should like to see, nor even all those which in the present state of things seem to many millions of men, including myself — indeed we are convinced of this — technically, economically and morally possible. I shall only speak of those forms of disarmament which are politically possible; that is, those which may be expected to secure here — where the
representatives of responsible Governments are assembled — a more or less complete measure of agreement. And those are roughly the forms mentioned in the drafts submitted by Viscount Cecil and M. Paul-Boncour. They are not few in number, yet we can easily review them.

With which of these problems shall we begin? With the problem of control? I do not know whether this is the right time for doing so. I shall, however, take the liberty of saying a word or two about it before proceeding further. I have already once been guilty of mentioning this problem here, and no doubt it was very clumsy of me to do so at the time. I have been told so often since. It was pointed out to me that I was very rash in submitting such a matter to the criticism of experts. I was told: "The experts will make short work of your idealism, they will prick your bubble and dissolve it into thin air". If I mention the subject again, it is because I was delighted to find that I had most of the military experts on my side and the civilian experts as well. I was also told that I had been very clumsy in mentioning the very word "control". Perhaps I was. Since then, I have discovered, in the drafts presented and in the speeches made by my colleagues, other words which are a great deal more discreet and more elegant. I therefore confess my faults. In order to prove to the front is to go abroad. It is indeed a fortunate country, where the idea of going to there is a very definite notion, which is that of service abroad. For an Englishman to go kind of translation or international adaptation of the English term. In the British army front line extended much farther back. I feel that the article in the British draft contains a had to decide who should receive front-line chevrons, we also had to decide how to define how can the fighting line be defined? How far back does it extend? In Belgium, when we between those available for despatch to the fighting line and those which are not. Moreover, account? I wonder how the troops will be counted, and how it will be possible to distinguish

Shall we speak of the execution of the Convention and the various methods which might be employed to give life to it and ensure its enforcement? We shall only be able to examine this aspect of the problem when we know exactly what the Convention is which is to be applied.

Shall we speak of naval disarmament first? If we are to discuss that subject, I must confess that I am not qualified to do so. My country has never had a large navy: for some months now we have had no navy at all. My Government took the view that it should effect every possible saving on armaments which would not endanger the country's security, and, since we do not really need a navy, it thought it was setting a good example by scrapping it before coming home.

Shall we speak of warfare in the air? We shall have to do so, but, here again, we would seem to be faced with a special problem which it will be much easier to deal with once we have solved a more general problem. The same applies to chemical warfare.

There remain the various forms of limitation which may be applied either to land armaments or to armaments as a whole. There remain the questions of effectives, material and expenditure. We shall not need to discuss the matter at length before we are convinced that it is with the question of effectives that we should begin our enquiry. And here we are perhaps very near finding the end of the guiding thread which we are seeking. We cannot, however, overlook the fact that this problem of effectives is in itself very complicated, and that it will not be easy to decide on our method of approach. When we read the British and the French drafts, we are filled with hope, for it seems that the question has been stated in identical terms. Article 5 of Viscount Cecil's draft reads: "The limitation of land armaments in pursuance of Article 1 of the present Convention shall be effected by limiting the number of effectives ..." Article 1 of M. Paul-Boncour's proposal reads: "The High Contracting Parties agree to limit the number of men on service in their armed military, naval and air forces or formations organised on a military basis to the effectives ...".

In both drafts there is an undertaking to limit effectives. Only — and this is the unfortunate side of the question — immediately afterwards, we are given two different definitions of effectives. It would be well to compare them closely in order to see what differences there are between the two drafts and how these differences, of which there are so many, may be classified in order that we may eliminate them one after the other.

The definition of effectives given in the French draft is obviously very simple and lucid: that is to say, all the men drawing rations, with the meaning of the present Treaty, shall be understood to mean effective, with the obvious that in an organisation which is on a military basis who may immediately be employed without being mobilised. To ascertain the effective liable to limitation, we can adopt a very simple method. We need only count the ration strength.

Is Viscount Cecil equally anxious to secure the limitation desired by M. Paul-Boncour and in the same form? Has he the same object in view? In some respects Viscount Cecil goes beyond M. Paul-Boncour's definition, and in others he falls short of it. It is this falling short to which I would draw your attention in order to show clearly the different aspects of the question.

The British draft does not limit every force, nor all the men drawing rations, since it is only concerned with land armaments. That is the first difference. But there is another. Viscount Cecil suggests that we should say: "By limiting the number of effectives, meaning thereby troops who could within... of the outbreak of hostilities be available for despatch to the fighting line". Thus all those who could not be despatched would not be taken into account? I wonder how the troops will be counted, and how it will be possible to distinguish between those available for despatch to the fighting line and those which are not. Moreover, how can the fighting line be defined? How far back does it extend? In Belgium, when we had to decide who should receive front-line chevrons, we also had to decide how to define the front line. At first we allowed a depth of one kilometer from the fighting line; later the front line extended much farther back. I feel that the article in the British draft contains a kind of international or international adaptation of the English term. In the British army there is a very definite notion, that of service abroad, to go to the front is to go abroad. It is indeed a fortunate country, where the idea of going to fight immediately suggests that of leaving one's country. We are not all equally fortunate,
Therefore we may ask what we have to gain by substituting this complicated notion. Involving a strict control on the part of an international body which would have to decide, in respect of each class of troops, at what distance from the fighting line they might be employed; what is to be gained by substituting this complicated notion for the simple process of counting the ration strength in order to ascertain the number of men serving with the colours?

Viscount Cecil proposes something less than M. Paul-Boncour but, on the other hand, he also proposes something more. He wishes to limit not only the number of men serving with the colours but also the number of men who may be serving with the colours within a given number of days from the outbreak of hostilities. We must appreciate the reasoning which has given rise to this definition. I believe I understand it: Viscount Cecil has explained it very eloquently. He has not forgotten the resolution which we adopted in this very place when we referred Question 2 (a) to Sub-Commission A. He has not forgotten that we said: “The Commission is of opinion that it would not be practicable at the present time to limit the ultimate war strength of the country,” but we asked if it would not be possible to discover more far-reaching limitations than those which would only apply to permanent armaments in time of peace. At that time we spoke of finding some guarantees against undue preparation in time of peace, and particularly against the employment of a country’s immense resources in time of war. Viscount Cecil felt the great importance of gaining time: he thought that, if it were possible to postpone war, it could often be avoided; he thought that factors which tended towards peace must be given time to make themselves felt, and that in the race which must ensue the forces of peace must be given the chance of being first in the field. It is indeed a great and noble purpose, to endeavour to prevent an increase in the war potential, but is not Viscount Cecil’s purpose reflected in M. Paul-Boncour’s speeches? Do we not find it in every article of the French draft, which deals with the necessary limitation of the period of service and the limitation of military expenditure? Is it not present when M. Paul-Boncour refuses funds for undue preparation for war? We should perhaps pause for a moment, in order to appreciate the importance of this fundamental purpose which is common to both drafts, for here we seem to be faced with the real problem of disarmament. Indeed, how vain would disarmament be if, while it abolished the old form of armed peace, with its formidable peace-time effective in barracks, its stocks of material in the arsenals, and its men throughout the country waiting for their marching orders, it led to a far more terrible kind of preparation, an organisation in time of peace of all the resources of a country for warlike purposes! Factories would be peaceful undertakings only in name; every soldier, every labourer, would not only carry on a peaceful occupation but would also prepare for war; indeed the whole activity of a country in peace-time would only be one vast preparation for war. We would then be left in the dilemma to allow complete freedom for preparations which would bring about a still more terrible form of armed peace than that which we already know and we should create a world in which there would be no hope left for the weak and the poor, a world in which thickly populated and well-equipped countries would ensure their economic domination not only by means of their better equipment but by means of brute force, by means of their overwhelming powers of aggression.

We all agree in recognising this danger. We understand that our work would be futile if, while we abolished the old forms of warfare, we took no care to prevent the development of new forms of warlike preparation. We disagree, perhaps, as to the means that should be employed.

To revert to the question of effective and the measures to be taken in order to prevent the despatch of too considerable an armed force to the fighting line, such as would threaten the maintenance of peace: we must admit that several methods might be employed. Viscount Cecil is in favour of one method; I find others in the French draft, and I can conceive of still further methods. Let us begin by examining the system laid down in the British draft, and let us consider whether it can easily be applied. Viscount Cecil tells us that we must limit the number of men who may be employed in time of war—that is, who may be despatched to the fighting line within a given time. But how are they to be distinguished and described?

In my country there is a fairly considerable number of men who may immediately be despatched to the fighting line: they form the trained reserves. They have been trained in time of war; that is not our fault; it so happened; the men are there. What is to be done with them? You tell me that there are too many of them; but they are there and I cannot “untrain” them, because they are trained. I cannot drive them away, for they are there.

Moreover, how am I to ascertain their number? What exactly is a man who can be despatched within a given time to the fighting line? I always try to give instances of which I have first-hand knowledge. When men were despatched to the fighting line in my country on the outbreak of war some of them were reserves and others were volunteers. I was sent to the front a few days after the outbreak of hostilities, and I had never had a rifle in my hand before. I was sent because men were needed.

Immediately war has broken out, men can be despatched who have been trained either in the army or by themselves; one can also despatch men who are willing. The number of men who might be despatched to the front line in my country depends on many circumstances, some of which are of a moral kind. For instance, a great national movement would permit of a considerable increase in the number of men immediately available.

We should also define what is meant by the despatch of men to the fighting line. Let me give you a concrete instance in this connection. In the course of the very interesting discussions in Sub-Commission A—over which I shall always be glad to have presided, layman that I am—I was very much impressed by a remark made by one of the French
we might begin by studying Viscount Cecil's draft, and, if this receives universal support, we on the first of these problems and only then deal with the second. For the second question, would not this enable us to find a solution more easily? Let us try first to reach an agreement means as the first. Would it not be a wise plan to try to discuss these two questions separately; one sees that this second limitation cannot be reached by the same methods and the same

Boncour's and Viscount Cecil's texts. I do not, however, think that this problem should have before us two distinct problems. First, there is the problem of the limitation of peace-

I doubt, therefore, whether this method is practicable.

Then there is the question of material. I should have been glad, if it had been possible, not to limit existing stocks — that would be hopeless — but to apply direct limitation to the renewal of such stocks. We might have been able to do this if we had had a ratified convention on international traffic in arms and a second ratified convention on the private and public manu-

And we should have been able to see exactly how much material is manufactured into account. Some (two or three) man the machine-gun, others form the first supply echelon, others again form further supply echelons in the rear; finally, others work in the munition factories producing ammunition, explosives and the raw material required for such explosives. Other men are employed in the works, producing spare parts and spare machine-guns. Now, in a country where military service is compulsory, these hundred men all form part of the trained reserves. I take the liberty of asking Viscount Cecil whether he can tell me how many of these hundred men are in the fighting line — five, ten, fifty? How are they to be counted? We are obviously faced with an ill-defined, vague notion. The time-limit depends on cir-

It has also been suggested that the number of periods of training should be limited. I must say that this idea appeals to me in many respects. I think, however, that it is not very practical, for we should have to know exactly what is meant by a "period of training". M. Paul-Boncour put his finger on the weak spot when he asked us how a man who has officially been trained can be distinguished from another man who has trained himself voluntarily, meeting together with his comrades on a Sunday under the aegis of some more or less official society. I doubt, therefore, whether this method is practicable.

Then, again, there is the reduction of the period of service. Would not the effect of this measure be to diminish the number of men immediately available at the outbreak of a war? Obviously, it is not possible to make exact calculations and to say that so many months or years of training are equivalent to so many men capable of being employed without re-training. But even a mere civilian can see that a man who has had six months' training and left the colours twenty years ago is not trained to the same pitch as a man who has had four or five years' training and only left the colours two years ago. This is, I think, a question which deserves consideration.

I said that these problems were distinct. The more one studies the situation, the better one sees that this second limitation cannot be reached by the same methods and the same

Secondly, there is the problem of preventing the rest of the population, the population which give rise to very arduous discussion; an agreement seems within the realms of possibility. But still it is a method, and a possible method.

But, before closing this brief summary of the possible steps by which indirect limitation might be reached, I should like to point out that, in dealing with limitation of effective, we have before us two distinct problems. First, there is the problem of the limitation of peace-

Secondly, there is the problem of preventing the rest of the population, the population which is not in barracks, from being used too quickly and on too considerable a scale.

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Secondly, there is the problem of preventing the rest of the population, the population which is not in barracks, from being used too quickly and on too considerable a scale.
acceptable, we should then have to consider the other methods of indirect limitation. I think, gentlemen, that in this way we should be able to get the end of the guiding thread which we were seeking in to our hands, and be in a position, once we were agreed on the point of procedure, to begin a useful and practical discussion without further delay. I even believe that the way would gradually be revealed in the course of this discussion.

Obviously, the questions will have to be set out in order, and for each of them it will be well to have a synoptic analysis of the French and British texts, so that we can work out a single text with amendments.

I think that we ought not to try to do the whole of this task all at once. The drafting of the analysis will take a fairly long time. We might leave this to the Secretariat, and wait until it is done before pursuing our discussions. I think it is enough for us to reach agreement on the first step; then, as the discussion proceeds, we shall gradually see the proper order in which to take the other points.

I think that in this way we shall be able to enter upon a full discussion with the minimum of delay, which obviously is what we ought to aim at.

One more word, gentlemen, and then I have done. Whatever method we adopt, whether that which I suggest or another, I most earnestly hope that we may arrange to have this discussion carried on in public. We are certainly faced with great difficulties; let us not try to solve them in the secrecy of Sub-Committees. Recent experience has shown that publicity is the surest safeguard of the League of Nations, and that, whenever the League has a great task to carry through, it never reaches a satisfactory conclusion except by public discussion. To-day we have assumed very exceptional responsibilities. If we reach a result, however modest, the belief in the possibility of a pacific settlement of conflicts will be strengthened throughout the world. If we fail, the public has at least the right to know why we failed. If we fail, none of us can agree to take a share of general, undivided responsibility; each of us must clearly and definitely take his individual responsibility.

The Commission rose at 12.50 p.m.

FIFTH PUBLIC MEETING.

Held at Geneva on Friday, March 25th, 1927, at 10.30 a.m.

President: M. LOUDON (Netherlands).

6. General Discussion (Continuation).

M. ERICH (Finland). — Mr. President and gentlemen — It is with great satisfaction that the Finnish delegates note the important and valuable work which has been completed by the various bodies responsible for preparing the Disarmament Conference. In the work which has been accomplished up to the present, nothing, needless to say, has been finally settled. There is reason to believe, however, that the imposing and striking collection of proposals, reports, resolutions and minutes will not remain a dead letter. There is reason to hope that they will not later on be proof of the inability of the Powers to achieve something lasting and capable of meeting the imperative needs of mankind.

In the British and French proposals, which have just been submitted to the Preparatory Commission, we believe that we are justified in seeing conclusive proof of the good will and spirit of conciliation which will alone enable us to carry through this work to a successful conclusion. The two drafts form a solid foundation upon which the final draft Convention can be built up. It would doubtless be premature at the present moment to express an opinion on the details of the various clauses of these two preliminary drafts. In Sub-Commission A, the military expert of the Finnish delegation had an opportunity of expressing his opinion with regard to the technical aspect of this question. At the present stage of proceedings it will doubtless suffice to say that, in principle, the Finnish Government gives its sincere support to all the efforts made to achieve the limitation and reduction of armaments. In the opinion of the Finnish delegates, it is essential, when limiting and reducing armaments, to proceed in such a manner that risks of wars of aggression may in future be overcome and even, as far as possible, eliminated. That is why both reduction and limitation can only apply to peace-time armaments; we must choose methods of limitation and reduction such as to
make it difficult to effect any sudden increase in peace-time armaments with a view to their utilisation in war.

In the case of the Finnish proposal submitted to the Preparatory Commission in May last, to the benefit of States which are victims of aggression. The Council furthermore decided, in the case of the Finnish proposal submitted to the Preparatory Commission in May last, to send it for reference pure and simple to the Preparatory Commission.

Finally, on the 12th of this month the Council, adopting the report of M. Benes, took note of the observations of the Financial Committee and expressed the desire that the subsequent work which the Committee would undertake in connection with this important matter would make it possible to frame proposals calculated to achieve the end in view.

The Finnish initiative, in so far as it is financial in character, thus remains the subject for examination by the Financial Committee. It is to be hoped that the desire expressed by the Council will be fully realised.

With regard to the other parts of the Finnish proposal, the Council, in the resolution mentioned, invited the Preparatory Commission to deal with these matters. The Finnish delegates, who wish to lay stress upon this point, venture to express the conviction that the Commission will be ready, when dealing with the general conditions of reduction and limitation of armaments, to bear in mind the special arrangements to be made for the benefit of certain States which are in this respect in a comparatively unfavourable position.

I am glad to note that the honourable representative of the Greek Government, M. Dendramis, has just expressed himself in favour of the Finnish proposal.

Among these special arrangements, so far as they are military in character, reference may be made to the institution of neutral zones. If in the future Convention the setting-up of such zones is taken into account, and if they are made sufficiently extensive, the security of the countries which are exposed to danger will be strengthened.

Furthermore, the Finnish delegates can with pleasure give their support to the essential part of the remarks made by the honourable delegate of Roumania, M. Comnene. No doubt disarmament in the widest sense of the term is of undoubted value in itself; at the same time, this important work would remain inadequate, would remain difficult to achieve and perhaps impossible of achievement unless account were taken of all the conditions of international security properly so called. We are dealing here not with national security in the sense in which this term is used in Article 8 of the Covenant but with security understood in a strictly positive sense, security guaranteed by arrangements made beforehand in accordance with the spirit of the Covenant, security as an equivalent or compensation for the weakening of the position as regards either the individual or general conditions of national defence, such compensation being essential to certain countries.

Since justification for the views of Finland, as expressed in the above-mentioned proposal, has been expressly recognised by the Council, to which body this Commission had referred the proposal in question, the Finnish delegates reserve the right to draw the attention of this Commission to these interests.

If Finland refrains for the time being from submitting any definite proposals, I must, however, draw attention to a memorandum of the Finnish Government submitted to the Commission through the agency of the Secretary-General. Without going into a detailed consideration of the questions which we have to consider, the Finnish Government has endeavoured in that proposal to bring out the general principles which are implied in the Covenant and which are such that they more or less determine the nature of the great problems of security. A logical and unbiased interpretation of the most fundamental provisions of the Covenant, such as Articles 10, 11, 16 and 17, as we all recognise and as the work which has been carried out since the first meeting of our Commission shows, is calculated to influence the various aspects of security and thereby to influence the question of disarmament.

The Hon. Hugh Gibson (United States of America). — The draft Conventions which have been submitted by the British and French delegations and the very important explanations which have been offered by Viscount Cecil and M. Paul-Boncour have given us a great deal of material calling for the most careful study. I confess I have not yet had time to examine these proposals. With the care which they deserve. My military and naval associates are studying them carefully, but in a matter of such vast importance they feel they will require several days to do full justice to the subject.

Realising the importance of the draft Conventions, I have telegraphed the full text of both of them to my Government, and I trust that within a few days I may be in possession of an expression of its views. Unless, therefore, the discussion takes on an unforeseen aspect, I do not at present propose to take part in the debate until I have had a full opportunity of studying the draft Conventions and the very valuable explanations which have accompanied
Viscount Cecil (British Empire). — I do not propose to enter upon a discussion of the very interesting subjects which have been raised during the past day or two beyond just saying one word about the position of the British Government in reference to the land armaments, because I am anxious to remove a misconception which even, I think, my friend M. de Brouckère to some extent shares. It is quite true that the position of the British Government with regard to land armaments is fundamentally different from that of many of the Continental Powers. Our army is not a competitive army; that is to say, its size does not depend upon the size of other armies. That is because we do not rely on the army for defensive purposes, still less with any idea of aggression. The idea of our army starting an aggressive war in Europe is fantastic, because it would be up against forces, even of much smaller countries than my own, which would be greater than anything we could put into the field. The only practical purpose for which it exists is to provide the forces necessary to guard the very distant and scattered interests of the British Empire. Its strength depends upon the necessity for providing reliefs for the various British forces stationed in India and other parts of the world. Therefore, it is perfectly true that, from that point of view— and also, of course, from the point of view of the fact that we rely on voluntary service and not on compulsory service which perhaps results from the very nature of our army— our position is entirely different from that of any of the other Continental countries. It follows that there is no direct interest to the British Government in limiting the strength of any Continental land army. It makes no difference to our army whether the land army of this or that country is big or small. No British Minister would go to the British House of Commons and say because “Aquitania” has increased her land army, therefore we must increase ours. Such an argument would not be listened to for one moment. Our only object, and I beg my colleagues to believe it (I am sure they do), is to get some system which will be accepted and which will conduct to the promotion of peace. I do not say that because we claim to be specially altruistic, but because it is to our interest to preserve the peace of the world. We know quite well that, if there is a great war in Europe, sooner or later we shall almost certainly be drawn into it. If for no other reason, therefore, it is to the profound interest of the British Empire to preserve peace if it can be preserved. But that is our only interest in the matter.

Perhaps I may just say one word, not in reply but in comment, on what has been very truly said, that you cannot expect any large measure of disarmament unless you get a sentiment of security. I quite agree. But, to our thinking, the limitation of armaments is the greatest step that can be taken towards producing the moral disarmament of the countries of the world; that as long as the attention of their Governments is concentrated on questions such as: Can we afford to rest on our present armaments? must not we increase them? it is evident that, as long as that is the preoccupation of every Government, you cannot have for any serious measure of moral disarmament. Although I am not for a moment saying that limitation of armaments is the solution, I do not think you can approach the problem of security, I do ask my colleagues to believe that it is a very important element even in that sense if they are to win the peace which the world so much desire. M. de Brouckère was good enough to pay much attention to the arguments and suggestions which I ventured to submit to the Commission. I listened, as I always listen to him, with the greatest pleasure and the greatest admiration. He will forgive me if I say that, owing no doubt to my obtuseness, I was not altogether convinced by the argument which he presented, and at the proper time it may be necessary for me to explain the grounds, which I trust I shall do with all deference and courtesy, on which I am still unconvinced that his point of view is right. But I do not think it would be convenient to do that at the present moment. We shall evidently have to take up these questions one by one, and when they come to be put definitely before us, I am a great believer that you will get much more useful discussions as long as they are confined to one particular question. So far I am in entire agreement with the general trend of M. de Brouckère’s observations on procedure, and it really was for saying a word about procedure that I ventured to trouble the Commission again. I think the suggestion made by the Swedish delegation, that we should ask the Bureau to present to us a synopsis of the proposals that have been laid before the Commission, would be a useful practical step, and I trust it will be done.

I just wanted to enquire from M. de Brouckère exactly how he saw the work that was to be done. He said he quite agreed to the method but he thought that the synopsis should begin — if I understood him rightly — by a synopsis on one question at a time. I do not at all say that that is wrong, but, of course, one must recognize that the very nature of the British Government has never tired of pointing out, all through that your colleagues hang together to some extent; and, though I am quite ready to discuss and even to arrive perhaps at preliminary and provisional decisions on one question at a time, I venture to suggest that some procedure must be adopted which will suspend the final decision until we see what has been done, or what is possible to be done, with regard to all questions, because we must never forget that this is not a matter in which...
we can debate with a view of securing a majority for this or that solution. You cannot settle the question of limitation of armaments by majorities. It does not in the least matter whether they are large or small; as long as the minority contains Powers of any importance at all, you cannot have the system, as evidently you cannot coerce any Power into accepting a system, and I have never concealed from myself that, though I am not able altogether to agree with the point of view put forward by M. de Brouckère concerning the limitation of land armaments, a point of view largely the same as that put forward by the French delegation, and though I still feel that there is a great deal more to be said for my point of view, yet practically it is conclusive if I am unable to persuade them. It is conclusive if they remain of their opinion; we cannot proceed against their opinion. It is just the same with the other questions: we cannot proceed by majorities. What we have got to devise is some procedure which will lead to agreement, and on that I am quite sure my colleagues will agree with me. Therefore, although I am quite ready, if the Bureau thinks it the best plan, to deal first by way of a synopsis of a particular group of questions, of a particular clause, or whatever system it thinks best, yet I should hope in that case that we should regard any decisions we arrive at, or any opinions we express, as to some extent provisional until we see what is going to be the general result of our conclusions in the whole of the Draft Convention.

I am sorry to have troubled the Commission a second time, but I wished to make that one point clear.

M. NIEGUEZ (Chile). — After hearing the views of most of the delegations here regarding the present position of the problem of reduction and limitation of armaments, I desire to express on behalf of my country, which is always faithful to the ideals of the League of Nations, its great appreciation of the work carried on by this Commission since last year, and to make special mention of the able work of the technical Sub-Commissions, and to pay a great tribute to the draft Conventions laid before us by the British and French delegations.

You are well aware, gentlemen, of the views of Chile regarding the general aspect of the disarmament problem and the features which it presents in the case of South America, features which resemble those which this problem presents in the case of all South American republics. These views have been expressed on many occasions by the delegates of Chile to the Assembly, and more recently by my predecessor in this Commission. Without repeating the arguments which they adduced, I desire to lay down three fundamental points: first, that there should be a system of regional agreements in Latin America, which agreements would be designed to prevent any possible competitive armament in countries which may at the present moment regard themselves as inadequately armed if the standards obtaining in Europe are applied; secondly, that the limitation of armaments should be subordinated to the requirements for security (and the latter may also assume in certain countries of America an aspect differing from that which they assume in the case of Europe); and, thirdly, that an estimate of armaments in relation to security should take account, in the case of certain American countries, of the geographical position and of political factors even more than of economic and demographic circumstances in countries which are in full process of development and are sparsely populated.

In the preparation of these agreements, to be carried on jointly with the consideration of the whole of the work of this Commission, we regret the absence of Brazil, whose admirable work will not be forgotten, as well as the absence from Geneva of certain neighbouring countries of Chile.

In speaking of regional armament agreements, I feel bound to remind this Commission of the definite proofs which Chile has given of the security of its policy of continental peace. As you are well aware, for a quarter of a century past my country has submitted all its international disputes to arbitration, being inspired throughout by the ideal of American brotherhood. Other manifestations of this same policy are also well known to you, such as the Treaty of Limitation of Naval Armaments and Naval Equivalents, which Chile concluded in 1902 with the Argentine Republic, and the Gondra Pact for the Pacific Settlement of Disputes.

In conclusion, I desire to state on behalf of my Government that the Chilian delegation will assist in every way in the disarmament work of this Preparatory Commission, and that its most cherished desire is to see the various drafts which have been submitted in so great a spirit of conciliation, and with the firm intention of achieving lasting and beneficial results, converted into something real and tangible.

M. DE BROUCKÈRE (Belgium). — Viscount Cecil was good enough to ask me just now to give certain details with regard to the manner in which I consider that the form of procedure, the principle of which has been stated by the honourable representatives of Sweden and Poland and by others, can be made to work.

What I had in view was not a synoptical table of ideas but rather one of texts, in order that we might in each case have a definite text to work upon. I proposed that this method should be tried first of all by taking a single chapter, and I must say that I was guided chiefly by the feeling that it would be very difficult to carry out this extremely delicate task. Yesterday, in fact, I was not all convinced that it was strictly possible. But I had to be tried. Since then, for my own satisfaction and instruction, I have made the experiment and I am now convinced that it can be done, since I succeeded in a way which will perhaps not satisfy all the delegates present, but, subject to certain small modifications, it will perhaps secure their general approval.
The attempt I have made has shown me that, although the texts could be arranged in an order which allowed them to be easily examined and discussed in a rational manner, to do this some liberties of form had to be taken as regards the wording of the texts proposed by the British Empire and France. This, of course, cannot be done without the permission of the authors.

I therefore think that the work could be done by the Bureau if the authors of the proposals will be good enough to give their support and assistance. I think we could probably prepare the first chapter (that dealing with effectives) by to-morrow. In this manner we should avoid interrupting our work, which I think is an essential point. It is obvious that we cannot dispose even of a single point at once. Just now the United States representative told us that he would be unable to express an opinion perhaps for several days. No one can think of taking a decision before hearing him, but at any rate we can begin to state our views. Moreover, the method suggested makes it necessary to drag the various passages out of their context, and the result is not very elegant. It is therefore indispensable that, when a chapter has been concluded at the first reading by whatever method we may determine, a new text should be prepared, corrected and brought up to date for the second reading. And similarly for each chapter; any member who had expressed his approval of a particular clause would not be bound as regards the second reading. Lastly, it is quite clear that, when all the chapters have been discussed, we ought to take a vote on the whole text, so that nobody would be committed except to a text of which all the details were known and defined.

Moreover, I think that, once this work has been done for the first chapter, the experience acquired will allow us to proceed very quickly with the others, so that, if the Bureau can prepare the chapter on Effectives for to-morrow, it will be able to do the same for the full draft Conventions by Monday.

M. Paul-Boncour (France) and Viscount Cecil (British Empire) declared themselves in agreement with this procedure.

Count Bernstorff (Germany). — I must apologise for speaking again, but, as the remarks of recent speakers show that we have now approached the question of procedure, I wish to say a few words on that point.

I should like to repeat here that the German delegation will give its full support to any method which offers prospects of general disarmament. As regards the question of procedure, we are in agreement with the proposal made by the honourable delegate for Sweden, which seems now to have found general acceptance, and especially are we in agreement with what has been said by Viscount Cecil. One point, however, which was alluded to by the delegate for Poland gives me some anxiety, especially one word which he used. He suggested that the two drafts should be co-ordinated, and it occurred to me that this might mean that the work of co-ordination would take place outside our meetings, so that we might have been in the position of having to oppose a draft which had already been concluded. We do not wish to be in that position; we desire to have an opportunity of expressing our views on every point in turn. In view of the remarks which have subsequently been made, our preoccupations in that respect have been dispelled.

For Germany at the present moment there are two points which are of particular importance: in the first place, we desire, as I have already pointed out on several occasions, to avoid any factitious solutions and we should consider as such any attempt to stabilise the present scale of armaments. What is important also is that the road which leads from the promises of Versailles to Article 8 of the Covenant and, finally, to the solemn undertakings of Locarno should certainly render possible first a partial solution of the question, which should merely be regarded as a first stage, but which should not be in the form of a solution which would not lay down the principle that the final aim is general disarmament, covering all States without exception, and based upon a plan which lays down an equitable proportion between the armaments of the various nations.

M. Sokal (Poland). — In reply to Count Bernstorff, I should like to say that I used the word “co-ordinate” to mean exactly what M. de Brouckère has explained. To co-ordinate would be to leave the two texts intact, and I fully agree, as I often do, with Count Bernstorff that full liberty should be allowed to the delegates to make any modifications they may consider desirable.

The President. — It is important to know whether we are in agreement regarding our method of work. The proposal which was first put forward by the Swedish representative and then by the Polish representative and certain other delegates, and which has been so ably explained just now by M. de Brouckère, gives you an idea of what the whole Bureau considers to be the most practical way of carrying through our work to a successful conclusion. If I understand aright, we have only two drafts before us, those of Viscount Cecil and M. Paul-Boncour. I believe that no other delegates wish to submit any further proposals, nor that M. Chao-Hsin Chu desires at the present moment to submit a draft for general disarmament or the readjustment of the armaments of the world. We must therefore begin as soon as possible the systematic examination proposed by M. de Brouckère. We can begin to-morrow. The Bureau will be able to circulate before that time a scheme of the first part of our work, which will be quickly followed by a complete scheme covering the whole programme.

The Commission rose at 12 noon.
SIXTH PUBLIC MEETING.

Held at Geneva on Saturday, March 26th, 1927, at 10.30 a.m.

President: M. Loudon (Netherlands).

7. Examination of the Synoptic Analysis of the Provisions of the British and French Drafts.

The PRESIDENT. — You have before you the synoptic analysis of the French and British drafts (Annex 3).

We have now to prepare a draft Convention which will not be a Franco-British draft but the draft of the whole Commission. In order to facilitate your work, however, and to give a clear view of the subject, you have the French and British drafts before you as a basis for your discussions.

I therefore propose that we begin the discussion on the part relating to effectives, and that we study this document point by point and sentence by sentence. Needless to say, any member may put forward any suggestion he may desire in the course of the discussion.


M. Comnène (Roumania). — I have read with great attention the document which was submitted to us yesterday evening, and I must say I find it an admirable piece of work, which will greatly facilitate the task before us. I have, however, been struck by one point which seems to me to be of the greatest importance, that is, the absence of a Preamble.

In my view, gentlemen, a Preamble is not merely an introduction of no importance indicating which persons represent the various Governments, or merely containing a vague form of words of no real significance. On the contrary, I consider the Preamble to be of considerable importance. In my opinion, it is in the Preamble that we should lay down certain principles and enunciate certain ideas which will, so to speak, govern the whole Convention and by which we shall be guided in framing the text.

Viscount Cecil (British Empire). — On a point of order, I should like to say that there is no idea of not discussing the Preamble. It is only a question of how we are to begin. I understood the suggestion was made by M. de Brouckère at the last meeting that we were to begin by discussing this question of effectives, and I understood that had been accepted. In that case, it is not perhaps necessary to discuss the question of what exactly should be in the Preamble.

M. Comnène (Roumania). — I entirely agree with Viscount Cecil. I am not discussing the Preamble. I too am raising a point of order, that of whether we should have a Preamble, whether it should be drafted before the text or not, or when it should be drafted.

My own view is that the Preamble should be drafted before the text, because it is in the light of that Preamble that we should draft the text. I know that there are delegations which would be ready to accept a given text if they knew that their views were met by certain considerations set forth in the Preamble.

The texts which we have before us raise both technical and political questions. How can we expect to agree on a given text unless we know, when we are drafting it, that the views which we represent and the interests which we advance have been duly met by the principles set forth in the Preamble? I venture to make this suggestion because I think it likely to facilitate our work. For instance, if we agree in principle on the application of Article 8 in connection with security, we can immediately go on to the discussion of the text, as I do not believe that the question of limitation can be separated from that of security.

The PRESIDENT. — I should like to point out to M. Comnène that we agreed yesterday, as Viscount Cecil has just pointed out, to discuss the text first. There will, of course, have to be a Preamble. When we come to the second reading, it will always be possible to make such amendments as may appear desirable.

M. Paul-Boncour (France). — I would beg M. Comnène to believe that, both out of respect for Viscount Cecil’s Preamble and out of attachment to my own, I am not at all inclined to regard them as a purely formal introduction to a Convention. I am so much in agreement with him as to the necessity of emphasising the connection between the reduction of armaments and security that I consider that he would be doing poor service to this idea if he only desired to embody it in a Preamble.

In reality, we are rather inclined to forget that we have three tasks before us of unequal length but of equal importance. The first is to fix a date for the meeting of the Conference, if it is considered possible to hold it. The second is to draft a Convention to serve as a basis for this Conference’s discussions. The third is to reply to the request made by the
Council when it referred to us Questions V and VII of the questionnaire which it drew up, i.e., to determine the standards by which countries can judge the minimum armaments necessary for their security as provided for in Article 8. I think it is at this point, my dear colleague, that the intimate connection between the guarantees of security and the effective which each State is to retain in the present state of affairs will reveal its full importance, rather than in the somewhat theoretical and general statements of the Preamble.

We began, and I think we were right in doing so, by considering whether a draft Convention was possible; the two other tasks, those referring to the date and the standards, have not yet been approached. I quite agree that your point about the Preamble should not be neglected. Indeed, I go further and think that it is not in the theoretical and general terms of the Preamble but in the definite replies to Questions V and VII referred to us by the Council that your views should find expression.

General de Marinis (Italy). — I gather from the observations M. Comnène has just made that he is anxious not to commit himself to accepting certain articles in the text without knowing beforehand what the Preamble is to contain. The President and M. Paul-Boncour have already given a reply, but I should like to take this opportunity of recalling the point made yesterday by Viscount Cecil, with which I am in entire agreement, namely, that the acceptance of any article is always subject to the general acceptance of the text as a whole. I wish to make this point quite clear.

M. Comnène (Roumania). — I am glad to note the statements made by M. Paul-Boncour and General de Marinis, which partly reassure me. I feel certain that I shall be fully reassured as the discussion goes on. I apologise for not having gathered yesterday that the question of the Preamble had been brought up, and that it had been decided to deal with the text first.

9. Examination of the Synoptic Analysis. Effectives.

M. Rutgers (Netherlands). — While I fully appreciate the value of the documents before us, I should nevertheless like to have an explanation of an expression used in the French draft, so that I may form a still clearer opinion of the difference between the two texts.

I read in Article 2:

“Effectives ‘on service’ within the meaning of the present Treaty shall be understood to mean effectives with the colours or in formations organised on a military basis which may be immediately employed without need for mobilisation.”

The expression “which may be immediately employed” does not seem to me to be quite clear. If we take it in its strict sense, it would mean that recruits who had not yet received training could not be immediately employed.

An argument in favour of this view would be the passage on page 38 of Sub-Commission A’s report, which says: “to apply the comparison to effectives with the colours and available, that is to say, effectives who have completed their training, but who have not yet been discharged”; but, judging by what M. de Brouckère said, I am not sure whether it is these effectives that are meant. M. de Brouckère said that the simplest system was to count the rations. But recruits who have not yet received training nevertheless draw their rations. The expression “which may be employed” seemed to me to mean “which are present”. The second paragraph of Article 6 of the French draft seems to support my interpretation, since it says that: “The actual effectives mentioned in Article 5 and in Tables III and IV annexed to the present Convention shall be the actual number of men shown, up to the time of their release from service with the active army, or during their periods of training, in the statement of effectives”.

The President. — I should like to point out to the honourable delegate of the Netherlands that we will deal with this when we come to the discussion of point 5 of the analysis.

M. Paul-Boncour (France). — I note my colleague’s remarks, and I will reply to them when the time comes.


“Viscount Cecil (British Empire). — I am not quite sure what the phrase “on service” means. Of course, that does not preclude the discussion later on of the question of whether you would limit trained reserves or not. If the acceptance of the words “on service” does not interfere with the later discussion which we shall have on this paper, then, of course, I have nothing to say about it. I should have thought it would have been better to have said “limiting the number of men in their armed forces” without the words “on service” because that introduces an ambiguity as to whether trained reserves are or are not included.

M. de Brouckère (Belgium). — The question whether or not trained reserves are to be limited is undoubtedly an open one, and will be specially discussed when we come to Point II. The reason we decided to use the term “on service” was to show that, for the time being at any rate, and in order to simplify discussion, we were confining our attention to men