TEXT OF THE DEBATES

FIRST PLENARY MEETING

Tuesday, February 2nd, 1932, at 4.00 p.m.

President: The Right Honourable A. HENDERSON.

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1. OPENING SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT.
2. ELECTION OF M. BUTTA AS HONORARY PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE.
3. APPOINTMENT OF THREE COMMITTEES: (a) COMMITTEE ON REPORT ON THE CREDENTIALS OF THE DELEGATES; (b) COMMITTEE ON THE PROVISIONAL RUPEE OF EQUITY FOR THE CONFERENCE; (c) COMMITTEE FOR THE PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION AND DISCUSSION OF PETITIONS FROM PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS.

1. OPENING SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT.

The President:

It is my duty and privilege to declare open the proceedings of the first World Conference on Disarmament.

The Council of the League of Nations, acting in accordance with the desire expressed by the Assembly in September 1930, decided that the Conference should meet this month. During its first session in May of last year it accorded me with an invitation to act as President.

Before passing on to my main subject, I feel bound to refer to the tragic fact that at the moment when this Conference, the very purpose of which is to take further steps towards the maintenance of peace, begins its work, there is a situation of such extreme gravity as that which now exists in the Far East.

It is imperative that all the signatories of the Covenant of the League of Nations and the Pact of Paris should make it their business to ensure the strict observance of these two great safeguards against acts of violence and war.

This is an historic hour. The Conference itself is unique. It includes representatives, not only of States Members of the League of Nations, but of States outside the League as well. Assembled here are the chosen spokesmen of seventeen hundred million people. There is no human being, whether his home is in one of the great centres of industry and population, in the deserts of Africa, in the jungles of the East, or amid the ice of the Arctic regions, who has not someone here to speak in his name. I need not enlarge upon the representative character of the Conference — the most important international gathering since the termination of the world war in 1918 — except to say that some sixty Governments are represented. Never before has there been so powerful or so impressive a list of Ministers of State as are included in our delegations.

I would, moreover, stress the momentous purpose of the Conference. There has never been a Conference with a task more urgent or, potentially, more beneficial to mankind than that with which we have been entrusted. We have to consider and discuss matters of vital concern to all nations and classes throughout the world. While we must have no illusions as to the difficulties which may confront us, we must not allow them to deter or discourage us. Rather ought we to be inquired to face them with courage and confidence. We must show a determination to overcome them by the certain
Faith we have that the successful accomplishment of our purpose will open up new and glorious prospects for humanity. Indeed, a review of the work of eleven years of almost continuous effort and discussion by statesmen and experts in many fields should serve to arouse in every delegate a vivid sense of our responsibilities to the peoples of the world, a lively appreciation of the supreme value of our opportunity, and a clear recognition of the urgent nature of our task.

As no formal agenda has been circulated, it is of primary importance that we should clearly understand our task.

What is that task? I would state it, as I see it, under three heads: (1) to arrive at a collective agreement on an effective programme of practical proposals specifically to provide for the partial and limited limitation of all armaments; (2) to determine that no armaments can continue outside the scope of that treaty by which all nations represented here are to make the achievement of universal disarmament as a final and satisfactory solution of the problem of war as inevitable, if not to the utmost of national strength, and to the fullest extent of our immediate effort, and that the common aim is to ensure continuity of advance towards our ultimate goal, without halting in any way from the fullest measure of success of our immediate effort, and that the common aim is to ensure continuity of advance towards our ultimate goal, without halting in any way from the fullest measure of success of our immediate effort, if we are to make the achievement of universal disarmament as a final and satisfactory solution of the problem of war as inevitable, if not to the utmost of national strength, and to the fullest extent of our immediate effort.

The making of such an international treaty in reality involves the whole issue of peace or war. It will not be disputed that the only course to ensure security against attack, and, if conflict took place, to be sure in war, is the holding of similar conferences at reasonable short intervals of time.

Every one of us knows that fear and suspicion, when they are active, are the principal cause of international conflict. We learn from experience that the maintenance of peace is the maintenance of international life, exercise a powerful and perennial influence. Yet it is diificult to conceive of any conference which, during the first year of its existence, set up by the League of Nations and the Commission for military, naval and air questions, and the body of technical experts appointed by the Member States on the Council. It was the duty of this Commission to advise the Council on the interpretation of Article 8 and on military, naval and air questions generally. The first Assembly of the League had to decide that disarmament was more than a technical question, and that for the purposes of the League it was necessary to consider also a whole series of political, social and economic problems. It accordingly decided to widen the range of inquiry. For this purpose, it appointed a Temporary Mixed Commission. The members of this Commission were, in the spirit of the principle of a general international guarantee system of supplementary defensive agreements at mutual negotiations, to study the problems of disarmament as a whole, without excluding any particular to the general principles of any universal system of guarantees. Everyone desired a universal system of guarantees, but there was no uniform basis of security. Some, however, thought that it would be more practical to avoid problems by giving due weight to the more concrete factors of the problem of security, and that it was essential to prevent such agreements from competing with any universal system to be established under the Covenant. They must not be allowed, to weaken the general system by the formation of groups with a predominately sectional object.

The draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance was referred to the Governments in 1922. But when the Assembly met in 1923 and 1924, it was obvious that it could not be accepted as satisfactory. The scheme and itself made an effort to provide a substitute for the temporary system, and the attempt was a more comprehensive plan, the Geneva Protocol of 1924. That protocol was based on the draft treaty on the renunciation of aggressive war, represented an advance upon the earlier instruments in respect of the three essential points to which I have already referred. First, it laid down criteria for determining the aggressor, secondly, it allowed the parties to the dispute to be represented before the Court of Justice, and thirdly, it provided that the settlement of international disputes was strengthened, arbitration being made compulsory in all cases, and that no provision was made for the purpose of settling the League on the question of the principle of a general guarantee system of special interest to the rest of the world. Thirdly, there was the necessity of making national guarantees for the peace settlement of international disputes.

The draft treaty on all these points represented a compromise, and the compromise was far more clearly evidenced in an attempt to combine the principle of a general international guarantee system of supplementary defensive agreements at mutual negotiations, and the principle of a universal system of guarantees, which was a uniform basis of security. Some, however, thought that it would be more practical to avoid problems by giving due weight to the more concrete factors of the problem of security, and that it was essential to prevent such agreements from competing with any universal system to be established under the Covenant. They must not be allowed, to weaken the general system by the formation of groups with a predominately sectional object.

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It became evident, however, early in 1923 that the protocol which had been accepted by the previous Assembly, and signed by
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The Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference was established by the Council of the League of Nations. It was considered necessary to establish a Special Committee on disarmament to work out general principles and to submit recommendations to the Preparatory Commission. The Special Committee was established on October 15, 1925. The League of Nations was asked to provide a special agent, who would represent the League at the Conference. The agent was appointed on October 16, 1927. The Special Committee met regularly and submitted its report to the Preparatory Commission in November 1927. The report was adopted by the Preparatory Commission and was submitted to the Council for consideration. The Council approved the report and recommended that the Special Committee continue its work.

The work of the Special Committee was carried out by a team of experts, who were selected by the Council. The team was composed of representatives from various countries, including Belgium, France, Poland, and Czechoslovakia.

The Special Committee met regularly and submitted its report to the Preparatory Commission. The report was adopted by the Preparatory Commission and was submitted to the Council for consideration. The Council approved the report and recommended that the Special Committee continue its work.

The Special Committee was asked to submit recommendations to the Preparatory Commission on a number of specific issues. These included the disarmament of nations, the reduction of armaments, and the establishment of a permanent international organization to maintain peace and security.

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ind naval armaments dates from the Washington Conference of 1921 and 1922. The League of Nations, which resulted in a treaty by which the United States, France, Italy, and Japan agreed upon a limitation of their capital ships and aircraft carriers. A further naval conference met at Geneva in 1927 to endeavour to solve the problem of naval armament difficulties with which the Preparatory Disarmament Commission was charged. This Conference failed to achieve a satisfactory result. But, at the London Naval Conference held at the time of the Washington Treaty, the United States of America, the British Commonwealth of Nations, and Japan agreed to dispose of certain existing capital ships and agreed, moreover, to limit their cruisers, destroyers, and submarines to certain definite figures.

I have come to the technical work of the Preparatory Disarmament Commission. That Commission was appointed in 1929. The Reduction of Armaments was continued in London. November 1930, five years of preparation and discussion. The Declaration of London was signed on May 28th, 1930. The aim of the Commission was to reduce armaments, but it did not contain any figures, and it will be for the future Governments to determine its practical scope. Such figures as are mentioned in the Convention and its annexes are merely illustrative of the Convention, moreover, is not an agreed document. Even as regards methods, opinions differed. Some of the articles were accepted by majority votes; others were rejected; and various reservations of varying importance. Some of these reservations were based on fundamental points and we think that the Convention was adequate, whereas others were made to suit the Governments on the ground that certain of its provisions went too far. It is hardly necessary to add that the representatives of the various delegations present in the framing of this document were necessarily and practical selection of alternative schemes. The Convention may be conveniently regarded as a synthesis of the discussions which are before us; it shows how these discussions and the terms in which they were conducted in which the most common measure of agreement which has been reached is the final report of the Preparatory Commission contains a record of the views put forward during their consideration. May I remind you that, in some parts of the treaty, in the interpretation of the limitations of the right of establishing a system of inspection? The Commission took immediate steps to obtain from the different nations any information which justified the belief that such information was of such value to the Conference if it were presented according to a uniform plan. The Governments were accordingly asked to furnish their particular, to use the table

framed by the Preparatory Commission and presented to the League of Nations. The Governments have done.

The Council also decided to ask the Communications and Transit Organization of the League of Nations for information concerning the exchange or publication of information relating to non-military aircraft.

The last step towards the preparation of this Convention was taken by the Assembly of the League in September 1931. It addressed a general appeal to all countries urging that every effort should be made to create a world opinion strong enough to enable the Conference to achieve a positive result. It was the view of the members of the Preparatory Commission that a favorable atmosphere for the Conference, the Nations whose States should undertake to become parties to an arms limitation with the object of preventing competition in armed strength and thus the lowering of the standard of living. The Convention, of course, is the first of a series of such conventions, and it was prepared for a period of one year from that date. The Conference to determine its practical scope.

The last stage was the Preparatory Conference. It met in an early December, 1930, and the Council of the League immediately took steps to make arrangements for a pre-Conference, setting its principal objective, as we have said in January and March of last year.

The sixty Governments, consisting of the members of the League and those non-League States, were invited to send representatives, practically all of whom accepted. This success must largely depend on the adequacy of the material at our disposal. Of the Declaration of London, the Preparatory Commission took immediate steps to obtain from the different nations the material that was available. It was realized that such information would be of such value to the Conference if it were presented according to a uniform plan. The Governments were accordingly asked to furnish their particular, to use the table.
The current financial burden and bring a substantial measure of relief to the world beset by grave economic difficulties!

The world needs disarmament. The world needs disarmament. We have it in our power to help fashion the pattern of future world history behind us. The complete elimination of armaments, and the future, is the well-being of mankind, the future of our developing nations. Therefore, I believe that the Conference is a step in this direction.

The President. — Before discussing certain details of procedure, I wish to give the Conference an opportunity of expressing its feelings of friendship and gratitude to the countries whose territories the Conference is meeting, and to the great statesman who represents them here.

I warmly welcome M. Motta, the President of the Confederation, and I propose that you should forthwith elect him Honorary President (Germany).

There appears to be unanimity in accepting the proposal I have made, and I hope that M. Motta will be able to make a declaration on the application of the conference: in which he personally, the Government, and the Swiss nation are held by all who are present here.

M. Motta (switzerland):

Transcript: Mr. President — Allow me to thank you most warmly for the proposal that you have just made. I wish to thank the delegates for their cordial acceptance.

In accepting the Honorary Presidency, you have declared to pay a tribute to my country, the Swiss Confederation, and to my present office. I can assure you that the Swiss people, the Federal Council and myself fully appreciate your gesture of courtesy and friendliness. Allow me, therefore, to thank you and my country and to take only a second place myself.

I am very glad to take this opportunity of thanking you, on behalf of the Swiss Confederation; I would like to express the earnest hope that this Conference, on which the eyes of the whole world are fixed, will create an atmosphere of lasting peace and will lead to collective agreements whereby general confidence between nations will be restored.

5. — CONSTITUTION OF THREE COMMITTEES: (a) COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS THE CREDENTIALS OF THE DELEGATES; (b) COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS THE APPOINTMENT OF PRO临时COMMITTEE FOR THE CONFERENCE; (c) COMMITTEE FOR THE PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION OF DELEGATIONS FROM PRIVATE ORGANISATIONS.

The President. — The Conference is now called upon to make some preliminary arrangements. First, with regard to the examination of the Delegates' credentials; secondly, in order to facilitate the preparation of law and rules of procedure. Accordingly, the Conference has before it a request from the governments of the United Nations to present petitions to it in full sessions.

I therefore propose that the Conference should set up three Committees.

The first will be composed of five members and will be charged with the examination of the delegates' credentials. It will be composed of the Chairmen of the relevant governments. It will meet as soon as possible and will draw up rules of procedure for the approval of the Conference on the basis of the draft prepared by the Secretariat and communicated to the delegates. It will consist of:

[Foreign names and countries listed]

The second Committee will be composed of sixteen members, and its Chairman will be appointed by the Conference. It will meet as soon as possible and will draw up rules of procedure for the approval of the Conference on the basis of the draft prepared by the Secretariat and communicated to the delegates. It will consist of:

[Foreign names and countries listed]

The third Committee for the examination of petitions will be composed of five members. It will elect its own Chairman and will remain in office as long as the Conference continues to receive petitions. Its main task will be, first, to draw up general rules for the presentation of petitions to the Conference, and, possibly in certain cases their ultimate publication in the Conference's official organ, and, secondly, to examine the text of the petitions before they are presented to the Conference.

If the Conference accepts my proposals with regard to the constitution of these three Committees and the number of their members, I would then ask its opinion as to the procedure to be followed in the case of the persons to be appointed. If a delegate claims that a vote should be taken on the principle of the creation of these Committees, as well as on the number of their members, I shall have the vote taken at once.

No proposal having been made, I take it that the Conference agrees with my suggestion and authorises me to present certain other suggestions which may help the Conference in the choice of the persons called upon to serve on these three Committees. It is then

[Foreign names and countries listed]

The five names suggested for the Committee for the examination of Delegates' Credentials are as follows:

M. Arturo de Aguiar y Beltrancourt (Portugal).
M. Alfredo Bringé Alem (Argentina).
M. C. Franquelo (Spain).
M. W. Pasqualetti (Italy).

The President: For the Committee to draw up Rules of Procedure, I suggest the following sixteen names:

The Hon. Alexander Caddon (United Kingdom).
M. E. Colban (Norway).
Professor J. L. Pavia Lina (Portugal).
M. Jules Fevrier (London).
M. Constantin Fortich (Yugoslavia).
Dr. F. Frey (Germany).
M. Tito Kornaroci (Poland).
M. Sean Lucey (Ireland).
M. V. Manzoni (Spain).
M. Theodore Maravic (United States of America).
M. Massigli (France).
M. Horacio de Rio-Branco (Brazil).
M. Rossa (Italy).
M. Sawada (Japan).
M. Boris Stix (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics).

[Foreign names and countries listed]

The above list was adopted.

The President: I propose that the Committee for the Examination of Petitions should be constituted as follows:

M. Paul Reynaud (France).
M. Z. Mataranc (Yugoslavia).
M. Brouwer (Netherlands).
M. J. Valdes-Mundinefa (Chile).
Dr. Mary E. Woolley (United States of America).

[Foreign names and countries listed]

The above list was adopted.

The President: I will ask the Committee for the Examination of Delegates' Credentials to be good enough to meet to-morrow morning, Wednesday, at 10 O'Clock, in Room 110
Second Plenary Meeting

President: The Right Honourable A. HENDERSON.

CONTENTS.

1. Credentials of Delegates.
Report of the Committee on Credentials.

2. Report of the Committee on the Wages of the Secretariat and General Staff.


4. Credentials of Delegates
Report of the Committee on Credentials:

The President. — The main item on the agenda is the report of the Committee on Credentials. I call upon the Chairman and Rapporteur of the Committee, M. de Aguirre y Bethencourt, delegate of Cuba, to read his report.

M. de Aguirre y Bethencourt (Cuba) . Chairman and Rapporteur of the Committee on Credentials:

Transcripts: The Committee appointed by the Conference for the Reduction and Elimination of Armaments to report on the credentials of delegates met at the Secretariat on February 3rd, 1932, at 14.30 p.m. and examined the documents relating to the fifty-seven delegations participating in the Conference which were transmitted to the Committee by the Secretariat.

I was elected Chairman and was entrusted with the duty of drawing up the report. The Committee noted that the delegates of the fourteen countries were accredited by full powers granted by the Heads of States.

Argentine Republic, United Kingdom, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Egypt, France, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Panama, Spain, Sweden, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Union of South America, United States of America.

The full powers in respect of these twenty countries cover all negotiations and the signing of any instruments that may be drawn up.

The delegates of the following States have received full powers from the Heads of States authorizing them to take part in the Conference:

Azerbaijan, Austria, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey.

The duly designated has received full powers from the President of the Council of Ministers, the Yugoslav delegate full powers from the Government of Foreign Affairs, and the Belgian delegate credentials signed by the President of the Foreign Affairs Office.

The Committee is unable to decide whether the full powers held by the delegates of the above-mentioned States may be interpreted as authorizing them to sign documents, and it consequently requests the said delegations to be good enough to state how their full powers should be interpreted.

The delegates of the following States have been accredited to the Conference (by a letter or telegram addressed to the Secretary of the League of Nations by the Minister for Foreign Affairs or the Permanent Representative accredited to the League):

Abyssinia, Albania, Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chili, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Hejaz, Hindustan, India, Irish Free State, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Roumania, Turkey, Uruguay, Venezuela.

The Committee ventures to propose that the Conference should ask any delegates of the last group of States who have not been empowered to sign instruments which may be adopted by the Conference, to procure such authority before the end of the Conference.

The Dominican Republic has, by telegram from the Minister for Foreign Affairs, empowered its delegate to follow the work of the Conference in the capacity of observer.

The Committee on Credentials, its Secretary notified of the full powers whereby the Secretary of State of the Republic of Liberia has accredited M. Antoine Stoll to take part in the Conference and to perform any acts connected with the actual object of the Conference. These credentials will be examined by the Committee at its next meeting.

The President. — I beg to thank the Chairman of the Committee on Credentials for the interesting report.

What are the delegates' observations to make with reference to the report?

The conclusions of the report were adopted.


The President. — We shall now consider the report of the Committee appointed to draw up Rules of Procedure for the Conference (Document Conf. D.35). I call upon the Rapporteur, M. Cobban, delegate of Norway, to present his report.

M. Cobban (Norway), Rapporteur:

Translation: The Conference will remember that at its first meeting, and on the proposal of the President, it constituted a Committee of sixteen members, to prepare Rules of Procedure on the basis of the Secretary-General's draft which was communicated to the delegations on December 23, 1931 (Document C.1002. X. 558,1931.LX. (Conf. D.14)).


The Committee worked diligently, but as its meeting this morning did not end until about 11 a.m. it was unable to examine the report to the delegations before the beginning of this meeting. In view, however, of the importance of not delaying our work for questions of procedure, I hope the Conference will have no objection if I submit the draft rules now.

My best course will be to draw attention to the amendments which the Committee proposes to the draft distributed, as I have just said, on December 23rd, 1931.

No amendment is proposed to Part I of the first draft.

In Part II: "The President", it is proposed to maintain the first paragraph as it stands. The following text is proposed for the second paragraph:

"The Conference shall elect its Vice-President, one of whom shall act for the President if occasion arises."