

Geneva, February 18th, 1932.

LEAGUE OF NATIONS

CONFERENCE FOR THE REDUCTION AND LIMITATION OF ARMAMENTS

Proposals of the German Delegation

When the German Government rejected the draft Convention at the last session of the Preparatory Disarmament Commission, they made it clear that, at the Conference itself, they would do their utmost, in co-operation with the other countries, to help finding the right way to disarmament. It is in this spirit that the German delegation submit the following proposals to the Conference.

In drafting these proposals the German delegation started from the fact that Germany and three other countries have already carried through disarmament for some years past under a regulation which was set up by the same Powers that drafted Article 8 of the Covenant and declared at the same time that the disarmament of the above-mentioned four countries was to be the first step towards general disarmament as provided for in the Covenant. Germany therefore considers her own disarmament as indicative of the course which the disarmament of all Members of the League will have to follow, having regard to the fundamental equality of rights of all Members of the League which excludes all discrimination in regard to any of them. The principles governing the general reduction and limitation of armaments, which the Conference is called upon to lay down, must be equally applicable to all Members of the League and to all countries associating themselves with the League's action for disarmament.

The defects and omissions of the draft Convention, which have made it unacceptable to the German Government, can be seen from the reservations incorporated in the report of the Preparatory Commission. A few examples will be sufficient.

One of the chief defects of the draft Convention is the insufficient limitation of land material. A mere reduction of expenditure, as provided for in the draft, does neither affect the existing material in service or on stock, nor does it provide a reliable basis for the future limitation of fresh material. The draft Convention enables the countries generally to keep, and even to increase, their heavy offensive armaments. The air armament as such, in particular, is allowed to subsist in the draft. By exempting from reduction and limitation the main part of reserve aircraft and reserve airplane engines the draft even creates the possibility of a competition between the signatory States in the development of these instruments of aggression. As to personnel, the draft Convention allows the various systems of recruitment to be maintained, but in the case of conscript armies it does not include in its provisions the trained reserves on which the strength of such armies rests. Finally, by departing in almost every decisive point from the rules of disarmament imposed upon Germany at the end of the war, while expressly maintaining these same rules for Germany in its general provisions, the draft Convention makes it impossible to reach an acceptable solution of the problem of disarmament.

The following proposals, which are not exhaustive but reproduce the opinion of the German Government in its general outline, are intended to carry through an effective reduction and limitation of armaments extending to all important factors of armaments. They include, in particular, measures of fundamental importance in regard to the prevention of an aggression. The proposals are based upon the principle that there can be only one system of disarmament in future which must be equally applicable to all countries; such a system would produce an equitable and effective solution of the problem of disarmament if armament figures to be incorporated in it for all countries were fixed at the lowest possible level. These proposals are furthermore taking into account the necessity to safeguard the national safety of nations as provided for in Article 8 of the Covenant.