

*Note from the Secretary of State of the United States to the French Ambassador at Washington*

WASHINGTON, January 11, 1928.

EXCELLENCY: In the reply which your Government was good enough to make to my note of December 28, 1927, His Excellency the Minister of Foreign Affairs summarized briefly the proposal presented by the Government of the United States, and stated that it appeared to be of such a nature as to satisfy the views of the French Government. In these circumstances he added that the Government of the Republic was disposed to join with the Government of the United States in proposing for acceptance by all nations a treaty to be signed at the present time by France and the United States, under the terms of which the high contracting parties should renounce all wars of aggression and should declare that they would employ all peaceful means for the settlement of any differences that might arise between them.

The Government of the United States is deeply gratified that the Government of France has seen its way clear to accept in principle its proposal that instead of the bilateral pact originally suggested by M. Briand, there be negotiated among the principal powers of the world an equivalent multilateral treaty open to signature by all nations. There can be no doubt that such a multilateral treaty would be a far more effective instrument for the promotion of pacific relations than a mere agreement between France and the United States alone, and if the present efforts of the two Governments achieve ultimate success, they will have made a memorable contribution to the cause of world peace.

While the Government of France and the Government of the United States are now closely in accord so far as the multilateral feature of the proposed treaty is concerned, the language of M. Briand's note of January 5, 1928, is in two respects open to an interpretation not in harmony with the idea which the Government of the United States had in mind when it submitted to you the proposition outlined in my note of December 28, 1927. In the first place, it appears to be the thought of your Government that the proposed multilateral treaty be signed in the first instance by France and the United States alone and then submitted to the other powers for their acceptance. In the opinion of the Government of the United States this procedure is open to the objection that a treaty, even though acceptable to France and the United States, might for some reason be unacceptable to one of the other great powers. In such event the treaty could not come into force and the present efforts of France and the United States would be rendered abortive. This unhappy result would not necessarily follow a disagreement as to terminology arising prior to the definitive approval by any Government of a proposed form of treaty, since it is by no means unreasonable to suppose that the views of the governments concerned could be accommodated through informal preliminary discussions and a text devised which would be acceptable to them all. Both France and the United States are too deeply interested in the success of their endeavors for the advancement of peace to be willing to jeopardize the ultimate accomplishment of their purpose by incurring unnecessary risk of disagreement with the other powers concerned, and I have no doubt that your Government will be entirely agreeable to joining with the Government of the United States and the governments of the other powers concerned for the purpose of reaching a preliminary agreement as to the language to be used in the proposed treaty, thus obviating all danger of confronting the other powers with a definitive treaty unacceptable to them. As indicated below, the Government of the United States would be pleased if the Government of France would agree that the draft treaty submitted by M. Briand last June should be made the basis of such preliminary discussions.