LEAGUE OF NATIONS

REDUCTION OF ARMAMENTS

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE COUNCIL
ON THE WORK OF ITS FIFTH SESSION

Held at Geneva from December 1st to 4th, 1926.

The Committee of the Council examined the French, Polish and Finnish proposals (including the Finnish memorandum on financial assistance) which were referred to it by the Council resolution of September 4th, 1926.

I.

As regards point 1 (a) of the French proposal, the Committee has the honour to submit to the Council the following report of M. van Karnebeek which the Committee has itself adopted.

"INVESTIGATION OF THE METHODS OR REGULATIONS WHICH WOULD FACILITATE THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL AT VERY BRIEF NOTICE IN CASE OF WAR OR THREAT OF WAR.

"The Committee of the Council sent a list of questions on this subject to the Secretary-General. The Secretary-General's reply is given in Annex I attached hereto. The Committee has also received a report from the Advisory and Technical Committee for Communications and Transit placed at its disposal by the President of the Council (Annex II).

"The Committee considers that this question is of the very greatest importance not only as regards the application of Articles 15 and 16 but especially also as regards the application of Article 11. It has been proved that the maintenance of international peace may depend upon the rapid and effective intervention of the organs of the League of Nations, and the importance of preventive action under Articles 11 and 15 cannot be exaggerated.

"In this connection, the Committee considers that the Governments Members of the League of Nations ought to assume a formal obligation to facilitate by all the means in their power the meeting of the Council in case of crisis and recommends that the Assembly should adopt to this end a general resolution embodying the principle of this obligation and constituting the basis of the practical measures of application to be taken in the future.

"The Committee considers that a programme of these measures should be studied and that this task should be entrusted to the Secretary-General, who would be asked to get into touch with the administrations of the States Members and with the international institutions and organisations which would have to be consulted. This investigation, pending the adoption of the Assembly resolution, might be undertaken immediately and the final result should be submitted to the different Governments, which would then be called upon to take the necessary measures to ensure application.

"With regard to the Secretary-General's memorandum and the Transit Committee's report, the Committee makes the following observations:

"A. General Measures.

"Admitting that the organisation of transport by rail and by air must necessarily be based in normal circumstances on commercial interests, the attention of the International Time-Tables Conference should be drawn to the special importance, from the point of view of international peace, of organising the means of communication between Geneva, as seat of the League of Nations,
and the different capitals; the importance of this justifies every possible effort to make these communications as rapid and as elastic as is compatible with commercial interests. The Committee strongly supports the Transit Committee's proposal that the Organisation for Communications and Transit of the League of Nations should be represented at the meetings of the International Time-Table Conference.

"For similar reasons, the Committee recommends that the necessary measures should be taken to apply the priority system proposed for telegraphic and telephonic communications of the League by the Transit Committee and to carry out its suggestion that the Council of the League should be able in special cases to apply to the Governments concerned to organise direct communication between specified points. It attaches great importance to measures which would confer on the States, the Secretary-General and the members of the Council and of other organisations of the League the right to use several telegraphic or telephonic routes simultaneously, simply on request and on their own responsibility.

"The Committee recommends to the Council that it should give its Technical Transit Organisation a permanent mandate to see that continual improvements are effected in communications of all kinds between Geneva and the different capitals on the lines specified above.

"B. Measures to be taken by States.

"The Committee strongly supports the Transit Committee's proposal that each State should appoint a central service with the necessary powers to facilitate the urgent convening of the Council of the League, the urgent transmission of messages sent in the name of the Council and the rapid transport of such missions as the Council might decide to despatch. It is of opinion, however, that this precaution should not be confined to States which happen to be Members of the Council, since effective and rapid co-operation would be no less valuable on the part of States whose territory members of the Council might have to cross when proceeding to Geneva, and whose transport services (railway, air, telegraphic, telephonic, etc.) would be required for the purpose of communicating with the Governments Members of the Council.

"This central service, which should be on duty continuously (day and night, and on holidays) would have to be given power to proceed immediately to take the measures necessary for the organisation of special trains, requisitioning of aircraft, etc., and to arrange with other services possessing similar powers in States whose assistance might be required as described above.

"The Committee proposes that the Council should direct the attention of the Governments of the States represented on the Council to the importance of taking such measures as may be necessary to enable their representatives to attend urgent meetings of the Council with the least possible delay.

"C. Measures to be taken by the Secretariat.

"The Committee warmly approves the statement of the Secretary-General who regards it as his duty to summon members of the Council urgently and without delay in case of serious emergency as laid down in paragraph x of Article 11.

"The Committee supports the conclusions which the Secretary-General formulated in his reply to the questionnaire addressed to him. It notes the following passage in his memorandum: 'It is conceivable that the Report of the Committee of Experts referred to in the answer to the second part of this question might necessitate the taking of certain measures by the Secretariat.' (See Annex I, page 5.) The Committee ventures to recommend that, if measures have to be taken, they should form the subject of consideration as soon as possible.

"The Committee recommends that the Secretariat should act upon the Transit Committee's proposal that a schedule be drawn up of the principal telegraphic, telephonic and radio-telegraphic routes available, in order that the Secretariat may obtain for its own use and, if necessary, for the use of those concerned information concerning communications between the different capitals.

"The Committee has devoted special attention to the position of the League in the matter of wireless telegraphy; this would seem to be inherently and eminently suitable for promoting rapid and uninterrupted communication between the Secretariat and the Members of the League. The Committee considers it desirable to recommend that all possible improvements should be made without delay but regards it further as highly desirable that the necessary work of preparation should be begun immediately in order that the League may have radio-telegraphic means of communication which would give it the highest degree of independence and universality compatible with technical progress. Accordingly, the Committee recommends to the Council that the Technical Transit Organisation should study this question with a view to submitting a report to the Council at the earliest possible date."

II.

As regards point 1 (b) of the French proposal, the Committee examined a report submitted at its request by M. de Brouckère. This report raises three groups of questions:

1. Questions concerning the application of Article 11, in regard to which the Committee will submit a detailed study to the Council at a later date.
2. Questions concerning Article 16, in regard to which the Committee, while also deciding to submit a report to the Council at a later date, passed the following resolution:

"The Committee directs the Council's attention to the advisability of collecting all the documents on the studies carried out by the League in regard to Article 16 of the Covenant, in order that this information may be placed at the disposal of the next Assembly of the League."

The suggestion put forward by the Committee of the Council is that all the resolutions passed by the different organs of the League concerning Article 16 should be collected in a convenient document, that they should be followed by a list of the texts to be consulted for the purposes of a more exhaustive study of the subject, and that they should be preceded by an objective summary of the work done by the League in this matter.

3. A certain number of concrete proposals with the object of facilitating the study of the methods or regulations which would enable the Council to take such decisions as may be necessary to enforce the obligations of the Covenant. These proposals, of which one in particular also refers to the memorandum submitted by the Finnish delegation on financial assistance, form the subject of the following recommendations which the Committee of the Council ventures to submit to the Council:

"(a) The Secretariat might be instructed to collect systematically precise information regarding the economic and financial relations of the various States, with a view to a possible application of Article 16 of the Covenant. This work would be carried out in accordance with a plan to be submitted to the Council by the Secretary-General, after consulting the Technical Organisations of the League, including, if necessary, the Joint Commission.

"(b) Having regard to the financial assistance provided for in Article 16 of the Covenant, the Financial Organisation of the League might be asked to consider the Finnish proposal and all other similar measures, with a view to the establishment of a common scheme of financial assistance in support of a State which is the victim of aggression.

"(c) The Legal Section might be instructed to study the legal position brought about by enforcing in time of peace the measures of economic pressure indicated in Article 16, particularly by a maritime blockade.

"(d) Experience having shown how greatly the presence of competent representatives of the League of Nations in the area of a possible conflict can in many cases assist in removing the danger, States might be asked to draw up beforehand lists of military and civilian experts from among whom the Council of the League could appoint commissioners.

"(e) The Legal Section of the Secretariat might be instructed to prepare a study on the legislation calculated to make it easier for States to apply the economic sanction based on the experience of countries which have already done something in this direction."

III.

The Committee examined the Polish proposal. At the suggestion of the Polish delegate on the Committee of the Council, the Committee decided to adjourn the examination of this proposal until the Preparatory Commission and its technical organs have completed their studies in the matter of regional disarmament.

IV.

As regards the Finnish proposals, the Committee decided to recommend that the Council should refer it without discussion to the Preparatory Commission.

Annex I.

Reply of the Secretary-General to the President of the Committee of the Council with regard to the questions submitted to him by that Committee.

Geneva, September 21st, 1926.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of September 18th, in which you were good enough to forward to me a list of questions adopted by the Committee of the Council

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1 The Preparatory Commission proposes that the Council should consider whether a special organisation for regional assistance within the framework of the Covenant of the League would be calculated efficaciously to aid the League's work in their task of assistance and thus facilitate and expedite the application of the articles of the Covenant in question (study of the mechanism, form and procedure to be adopted in the matter of regional assistance).

2 The Preparatory Commission proposes that the Council should undertake the examination of special arrangements whereby a reduction of armaments agreed to by States unfavourably placed, owing to geographical or other exceptional circumstances, might be compensated in order to meet their requirements for security.
on that day and to inform me that the Committee would be glad to hear what I had to say on
the subject at one of its later meetings.
I need not say that I am entirely at the disposition of the Committee for this purpose. In
the meantime, I beg to forward herewith, for its information, a brief memorandum dealing with
the various points raised in the questionnaire.
(Signed) Eric DRUMMOND,
Secretary-General.

QUESTIONS I AND 2.

On what occasions has the Council been summoned to deal with international crises?
What steps were taken in each case?
The first paragraph of Article XI of the Covenant lays down that, "should any war or threat
of war arise, the Secretary-General shall, on the request of any Member of the League, forthwith
summon a meeting of the Council". This provision of the Covenant has been utilised on two
occasions by Members of the League:

(a) On May 31st, 1920, Persia, following up previous communications, asked for an
urgent meeting of the Council to consider acts of aggression on the part of the Soviet Govern-
ment. This appeal was communicated to the Members of the Council and the meeting took
place on June 14th.

(b) On October 23rd, 1925, the Secretary-General received a telegram from the Bul-
garian Government asking, in conformity with Articles 10 and 11 of the Covenant, that the
Council should be immediately summoned to consider the situation created by the entry
of Greek troops on Bulgarian territory. The Secretary-General took immediate action in
accordance with the duty laid upon him by the first paragraph of Article 11, and sum-
moned the Council, after consulting the President, to meet in Paris on October 26th.

The second paragraph of Article 11 provides that any Member of the League may bring to
the attention of the Assembly or the Council any circumstance whatever affecting international
relations which threatens to disturb international peace.
No special provision is made in this paragraph in regard to the summoning of the Council,
but there have, in fact, been certain occasions on which Members of the League, in asking the
Council to consider a given question under the terms of that paragraph, have requested that a
special meeting should be held in order to avoid delay:

(a) On August 12th, 1921, M. Briand, in his capacity of President of the Allied Supreme
Council, asked that a special meeting should be held to make recommendations regarding
the fixing of the frontier in Upper Silesia. The meeting took place on August 29th.

(b) On November 7th, 1921, the British Government asked the Secretary-General to
take immediate steps to summon a meeting of the Council to consider the situation created
by the advance of troops of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes on Albanian
territory. This request was at once communicated to the Members of the Council and a
meeting took place in Paris on November 18th.

(c) On October 14th, 1924, the British Government asked for a special meeting of the
Council to consider the situation on the frontier between Turkey and Iraq. This request
was at once communicated to the Members of the Council and the meeting took place on
October 27th.

What difficulties, if any, arose?
No difficulties arose in any of the above-mentioned cases. The Committee will realise that,
when no definite reference is made to the first paragraph of Article 11, and when, therefore, it is
not claimed that such an emergency has arisen as would authorise the Secretary-General, under
the terms of that paragraph, to take the initiative in summoning the Council, it is necessary for
him to receive, before issuing a convocation, the authorisation of the Acting President of the
Council, and that the President will, in such circumstances, desire to consult his colleagues before
taking a definite decision.
The above, however, does not apply when a serious emergency arises, in which case the
Secretary-General has the right and duty of summoning the Council on his own authority, provided
that he has received a request from any one Member of the League.
The Committee will observe that in all but one of the above-quoted cases an interval of from
ten to fifteen days took place between the despatch of the request and the actual meeting of the
Council.
There is no reason to doubt that the meeting could have been held much more promptly
had the situation appeared to necessitate this.
Have you any suggestions for the improvement of the procedure?

Taking the word "procedure" in its strict sense, I have no proposals to make. No procedure has been laid down to govern the action of the Secretary-General under the first paragraph of Article X, and it seems essential that he should remain free from all necessity of following any sort of procedure laid down beforehand in order to avoid any conceivable risk of delay. (See also reply to Question 6.)

Are the technical arrangements for communications in such cases satisfactory, and, if not, in what respects are they unsatisfactory?

I am not aware that there has been any difficulty or cause for dissatisfaction in regard to rapidity of communications in any of the above-mentioned cases. (See, however, the observations below.)

What are your general observations and your opinions on the steps to be taken with regard to points i (a) and 3 (a) of the French proposal?

The following are the general observations which I would submit:

(a) In regard to the action of the Secretariat, it seems, as I have above remarked, essential that no restriction in regard to procedure should be imposed on the action which the Secretary-General may at any time be called upon to take under the terms of the first paragraph of Article X of the Covenant. I have been able, as a matter of fact, in such cases as have arisen up till now, to consult the President of the Council without losing time by doing so. This may not always be the case, and it is evidently the duty of the Secretary-General himself to take the action laid down by the Covenant, consultation of any sort being a matter of possible convenience but not of necessity.

From a material point of view, arrangements have already been made to ensure that telegrams addressed to the Secretary-General should always be opened without loss of time by an official capable of appreciating whether or not they are of an urgent character. It is conceivable that the report of the Committee of Experts referred to in the answer to the second part of this question might necessitate the taking of certain measures by the Secretariat.

(b) So far as the States represented on the Council are concerned, it is clearly desirable that all measures should be taken to enable them to be represented at any meeting which may be called, however short the notice may be. It is perhaps hardly within my competence to make observations on the methods to be adopted by the various States to ensure this end. They must, no doubt, vary to some extent according to the distance from the seat of the League of the capital of the country concerned and according to the method adopted for its regular representation on the Council. What seems essential is that it should be possible at any moment for an urgent communication from the Secretary-General to be received and considered by the competent authorities, and that in all circumstances, particularly in times of international tension, arrangements should be foreseen whereby each country can be represented at the Council at the shortest possible notice.

As regards points i (a) and 3 (a) of the French proposal, the Committee is no doubt aware that the report of the Enquiry Commission on the Greco-Bulgarian incident draws attention to the fact that, if the communication addressed by the President of the Council to the Greek Government had arrived half-an-hour later than it actually did, the result might have been exceedingly serious. The Commission accordingly drew the Council's attention to the desirability of considering measures for hastening intervention by the League in moments of crisis. The Council, at its meeting on December 14th, 1925, considered this suggestion and decided to refer it to the Advisory Committee for Communications and Transit, with the request that the Committee should examine the matter and submit a report to the Council.

In compliance with the above request of the Council, the Transit Committee has decided to carry out an expert study of the best means of improving communications of every kind with the seat of the League in time of crisis. This corresponds with points i (a) and 3 (a) of the French proposal.

Experts in railway matters, aerial navigation and telegraphy are to meet for this purpose in November or December. The International Committee on Long-Distance Telephony, which has also been consulted, is to consider the matter at its next meeting in Paris in December. A general report will then be drawn up by the Transit Committee and forwarded to the Council.

I understand that the exchanges of views which have already taken place on this subject between the members of the Transit Committee tend to show that a series of practical measures of a technical nature might be adopted.
Annex II.

COMMUNICATIONS OF IMPORTANCE TO THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS AT TIMES OF EMERGENCY.

Report submitted to the Council by the Advisory and Technical Committee for Communications and Transit.

The Commission of Enquiry into the Greco-Bulgarian Conflict recommended that "it might be considered whether special facilities for communications and transit could not be granted to Governments and to the Secretariat in case of a threat of war — in particular, the use of wireless telegraphy and priority messages might be considered". The Council decided to refer this suggestion to the Advisory and Technical Committee for Communications and Transit and to request the latter to examine it and report to the Council. As similar questions, but covering a wider field, have also been raised in connection with the preparatory work for the reduction of armaments, the Advisory and Technical Committee examined the whole problem of the principal communications of importance to the League at times of emergency. The Committee felt that it was its duty to see what special measures might be adopted when League action under Articles 15 and 16 of the Covenant was taken or requested to ensure the necessary speed and, in times of crisis, the necessary security, for communications of importance for the summoning of the Council and for all relations between Members of the League concerned, the Council, the Secretary-General and missions appointed by the Council.

The Committee has obtained the advice of qualified experts. The conclusions which it submits represent the unanimous opinion of the specialists consulted. The question of railway transport was studied by its permanent Committee for Transport by Rail. Telegraphy and radio-telegraphy were also examined by a special committee of experts.

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A. — Transport by Rail.

1. Any regular improvement in railway time-tables, particularly for communications between Geneva and the chief capitals, would greatly facilitate travelling to Council meetings and the despatching of missions at times of emergency. On the other hand, time-tables must obviously be established with reference to commercial conditions, and communications with the League cannot have priority over such requirements. It would be expedient, however, in order to promote all reasonable improvements in time-tables, to develop the co-operation already existing between the League Organisation for Communications and Transit and the International Time-table Conference. It might be possible to consider the appointment of a representative of the Technical Organisation to attend in an advisory capacity meetings of the International Time-table Conference.

2. At times of emergency, special measures might undoubtedly be taken in many cases to improve railway communications of importance to the League (special changes in time-tables, special trains, special connections with other means of transport, such as air transport, motor services, etc.). In view of the extreme variety of the cases to be considered and the fact that, as regards the movements of members of the Council and the despatching of missions by the League, communications cannot be considered in any one country alone but must be studied in all the countries Members of the League, no plan can be drawn up in advance. At the same time, under normal conditions, two measures might be considered for minimising delays at times of emergency: first, all the States Members of the League might be requested to declare their readiness, immediately on being notified by the Secretary-General of the existence of a state of emergency, to take all possible measures to help the journeys of members of the Council and missions.
appointed by the League; second, each State might be requested to designate a central service in possession of the necessary instructions and powers, with which Members of the Council and the Secretary-General of the League could get into direct touch upon notification of a state of emergency, in order to ensure that rapid means of transport are made available at once. It would naturally be understood that all extra costs arising out of exceptional conditions would be met out of League funds.

B. — Transport by Air.

The considerations advanced in regard to transport by rail at times of emergency also apply, mutatis mutandis, to transport by air. It would be even simpler than in the case of railway transport to take special measures at such times to improve air communications of importance to the League (as regards the lines in use: special changes in timetables, organisation of special services over those lines; apart from lines already open, general permission for aircraft other than those belonging to a regular line when carrying members of the Council or agents of the League whose names had previously been communicated, irrespective of the nationality of such aircraft).

No plan can be established in advance, but it is expedient, here again, that States Members of the League should declare their readiness in such circumstances to take all measures within their power and should designate in advance a central service with the necessary instructions and powers.

C. — Telegraphic and Radio-telegraphic Questions.

1. All messages sent with a view to the application of Article 15 or Article 16 of the Covenant and addressed to the President of the Council of the League or to the Secretary-General by a Government, a member of the Council, or a member of a mission despatched by the Council; all messages sent by the President of the Council or by the Secretary-General to a Government, a member of the Council, or a member of a mission despatched by the Council, might, if the sender considered that these messages were of extreme urgency, bear the special note “ Priorité Nations .” If desirous of making use of this note, the sender would write before the address “ PCD Priorité Nations ”; this will be charged as three words. In transmitting the telegram, the service concerned would place the service instruction “ S Priorité Nations “ at the head of the text. Messages preceded by these indications could only be sent by the President and the members of the Council in person, the acting Secretary-General in person, and members of missions whose names had been notified in advance by the Secretary-General to all Governments interested.

2. All messages preceded by these conventional signs and notes would enjoy priority over all other communications, and the service despatching them would, in due course, forward the sender an acknowledgment of receipt, to be transmitted as urgent.

3. Any sender who might consider, in view of the general gravity of the occasion, that special arrangements should be made for the safe transmission of his telegram, and that his telegram should therefore be transmitted both by the ordinary line and by one or more additional routes, either telegraphic or radio-telegraphic, might make copies of his telegram and request the transmitting service to send these copies by routes specified by him; the telegraph service would follow out such instructions unless this were for material reasons impossible.

To ensure the satisfactory working of these arrangements, a schedule of the principal telegraphic and radio-telegraphic routes available might be drawn up, with the assistance of the best-qualified technical body. The Secretary-General of the League would keep himself and those concerned informed of the various routes available for transmitting and, where necessary, duplicating communications between capitals. In most cases, of course, several routes would be available, so that the risk of certain telegraphic and radio-telegraphic services being interrupted at times of emergency would be reduced to a minimum.

4. In special cases, the Council of the League of Nations might request the Governments concerned to arrange, if possible, for direct connection between specified points. No advance proposals can be made on this matter.

The Committee is of opinion that a formal inter-Governmental agreement, or even an inter-departmental arrangement in the proper sense of the term, would be not merely a slow and difficult but also a useless method for putting into effect these measures for telegraphy or other communications. If, when requested by the Council, the Governments of the States Members were willing to follow out such a plan so far as it concerned them individually, and to give facilities for the execution of these measures, the telegraph departments would naturally concur and would be prepared to issue, and from time to time repeat, the necessary instructions to their officials, and to seek the assistance of the competent international technical organisation.

D. — Telephonic Questions.

As regards telephonic questions, in view of the extreme rapidity with which urgent State communications are forwarded under the newly revised telegraph regulations, and of the difference between messages sent by this means and by telegraphic, it appears to be unnecessary to consider special arrangements for times of emergency, though the permanent improvement of the European telephone system is naturally of great importance to the League, especially in times of crisis. The Assembly has already passed a recommendation urging that, under the new European telephone system, communications with the League should be treated on the same footing as communications between the chief capitals. This question, which does not concern only times
of emergency and therefore exceeds the scope of the present report, was submitted to the International Advisory Committee on Long-Distance Telephony, which includes most of the European telephone administrations; this Committee is to examine the question at its next meeting at the beginning of December. The Council will be duly informed of its conclusions.

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The Advisory and Technical Committee, in submitting this general plan to the Council, is of opinion that if, at the request of the Council, States Members of the League or a sufficient number of such States were to declare their readiness to accept the plan as a whole and to help to carry it out, the Secretary-General of the League, with the assistance of the Committee of the services mentioned in paragraphs A and B and of the telegraph administrations and their agents, would have no difficulty in working out the detailed plan for these practical improvements.