

# VERBATIM RECORD

OF THE

## Eighth Ordinary Session of the Assembly

OF THE

### LEAGUE OF NATIONS

#### FOURTH PLENARY MEETING

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7th, 1927, AT 10.15 A.M.

##### CONTENTS :

23. REQUEST BY BELGIUM FOR RE-ELIGIBILITY FOR ELECTION TO THE COUNCIL.

24. REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE COUNCIL AND OF THE SECRETARIAT.

Continuation of the discussion.

Speeches by M. ERICH (Finland), M. AKEL (Estonia), M. CIELENS (Latvia), M. LÖFGREN (Sweden).

25. APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE DELEGATES TO THE FINNISH DELEGATION.

Letter from the President of the Delegation.

President : M. GUANI.

23. — REQUEST BY BELGIUM FOR RE-ELIGIBILITY FOR ELECTION TO THE COUNCIL.

The President :

*Translation* : Before proceeding with the agenda, I wish to read to the Assembly the following letter, dated September 6th, 1927, which I have received from the first delegate of Belgium :

“ In conformity with the provisions of Articles II and IV of the Rules concerning the election of non-permanent members of the Council, adopted by the Assembly on September 15th, 1926, I have the honour to ask Your Excellency to submit to the Assembly the request of the Belgian Government that Belgium may be declared to be a State re-eligible for election to the Council.

(Signed) Emile VANDERVELDE. ”

The Assembly has to consider a request for re-eligibility from a non-permanent Member of the Council. This request has been submitted

in accordance with the Rules laid down in the resolution adopted by the Assembly during its seventh ordinary session, for the election of the nine non-permanent members of the Council, their term of office, and the conditions of re-eligibility.

Article II, paragraph 3, of this resolution provides : “ The Assembly may not decide upon the re-eligibility of a Member except upon a request in writing made by the Member itself. The request must be handed to the President of the Assembly not later than the day before the date fixed for the election ; it shall be submitted to the Assembly, which shall pronounce upon it without referring it to a Committee and without debate. ”

The Belgian Government's request having been submitted in proper form, the Assembly will vote upon it at an early meeting, without debate and without referring it to a Committee.

As regards the date when the vote might be taken, I think I shall be interpreting the Assembly's wishes in proposing that this question be submitted to the General Committee, which is responsible for arranging the work of the Assembly, so that it may name a date for the latter to pronounce upon the request for re-eligibility.

If no objections are raised, I shall consider this proposal adopted.

*The proposal was adopted.*

24. — REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE COUNCIL AND OF THE SECRETARIAT : CONTINUATION OF THE DISCUSSION.

The President :

*Translation* : The next item on the agenda is the continuation of the general discussion on the Work of the Council, the Work of the Secretariat and the Measures taken to execute the Decisions of the Assembly.

M. Erich, first delegate of Finland, will address the Assembly.

M. Erich (Finland):

*Translation:* Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen — A study of the report with which we are dealing furnishes liberal proof of the continuous, devoted and valuable work of the League and its various organisations, and more particularly of the Secretariat.

We are glad to note that the Finnish proposal, which was submitted to the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference, occupies a conspicuous place in the Secretary-General's report. Though the results obtained by that important Commission are as yet small, attention might usefully be directed to one special feature, the scheme of financial assistance in support of a State which is the victim of aggression. This scheme forms part of the general proposal submitted by the Preparatory Commission.

Thanks to the praiseworthy efforts of this Commission, the Committee of the Council, the Council and, lastly, the Financial Committee, the scheme has now been incorporated in a preliminary draft, indicating on broad technical lines the mechanism of the whole system of financial assistance. In conformity with the Council's decision, the Governments of Members of the League were invited, in a circular letter from the Secretary-General, dated July 11th, 1927, to submit their observations on the report of the Financial Committee.

The Finnish Government accordingly gave a detailed and exhaustive opinion, from the technical point of view, regarding the general lines of the scheme recommended by the Committee.

While refraining for the moment from touching on the substance of the question, the Finnish delegation now expresses its firm conviction that this scheme, which is in the general interest and has been so successfully initiated, will be favourably received by the Members of the League, as it was by the League organs, and trusts that the Council, after studying the opinions expressed, will indicate the political bases for a future Convention and request the Financial Committee to frame a draft Convention.

The Finnish proposal, which was so warmly received by the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference, is still on the programme of that Commission. As may be seen from the documents submitted to the Assembly, the Preparatory Commission decided at its last session to adjourn the study of Resolution No. 8, that is, the Finnish proposal, to a later session. The Commission expects then to revert to the question in conformity with the decision of the Council.

The limitation and reduction of armaments is, of course, the Preparatory Commission's chief concern, and the Finnish Government is of the opinion that, despite the meagre results hitherto obtained, disarmament, which is one of the stipulations of the Covenant, cannot be indefinitely adjourned. Such a decision would cause serious and widespread disappointment. The work must emphatically be resumed either in November, as was originally intended, or early next year.

I have mentioned the principal reason why the important work of this Commission must be carried on without a break. But there are also certain subsidiary tasks explicitly devolving upon the Commission in virtue of special decisions, as, for example, this very proposal put forward by the Finnish Government, which is awaiting further examination by the Commission. This

is an added reason for not adjourning the work of the Commission *sine die*.

The Finnish Government and delegation are fully aware that any great evolution, any progress or reform in the international sphere is normally bound to take a long time. The essential point is to persist in the examination and to follow the development of important matters "affecting the peace of the world", in the wide sense of the Covenant. When, therefore, any scheme that is recognised to be useful, practicable and in conformity with the guiding principles of the Covenant is referred to the League organs, it must not be abandoned simply on account of the difficulty of finding a solution acceptable to all parties.

Even if such a scheme lies buried, as it were, for the time being, there is still the possibility, so ingeniously invoked on two occasions by the Netherlands delegates, of the resurrection of an idea which failed perhaps to materialise at the first attempt, despite its manifest intrinsic merits.

We therefore warmly welcome any proposal such as that put forward yesterday by the first delegate for the Netherlands, advocating the serious re-examination of the big plans for organisation, which have always preoccupied — I may even say, haunted — the League. We are convinced that the special limited proposals submitted to the Preparatory Commission by certain States, including Finland, are bound to be considered when any wider and more general scheme, falling within the vast domain of international security, is being discussed.

The idea of seeking a remedy for the present economic ills by convening an Economic Conference was received with much interest in Finnish circles. The Finnish delegation to the Conference accordingly supported, whenever possible, all proposals designed to eliminate national and international economic difficulties.

In spite of the diversity of views represented, the Conference drew up conclusions which are regarded in the main as equitable, and which answer Finland's requirements. The Finnish Government is glad to find itself in agreement with the essential passages of the reports adopted at the Conference, and trusts that these resolutions will not be allowed to remain a dead letter, but will be put into practice, so that economic recovery may gradually be achieved. Economic recovery is essential to international life, but depends largely on the establishment of international security, and this in its turn will be influenced by consolidation in the economic sphere.

I propose now to deal with two special points. The Finnish Government desires to inform you, through its delegation here, that the President of the Republic has just ratified the Slavery Convention. Finland's participation in this humanitarian work represents, as you know, simply an assertion of principle on the part of a small nation, which is an ardent supporter of human progress and has from its very infancy respected the liberty of the individual — it represents, in fact, the complete, sincere and unreserved application of the lofty principles set forth in Articles 22 and 23 of the Covenant, which are designed to promote solidarity and fraternity among all the nations of the world.

While slavery is a scourge of humanity which, at all events in its more obvious and more inhuman forms, is doomed to disappear with the onward march of civilisation, there are other scourges which defy the efforts of civilisation even at its highest level. There is the serious problem of alcoholism. A few weeks ago the eminent President of the Swiss Confederation, in the course of a great

speech, referred in eloquent and moving terms to the great danger of alcoholism from the point of view of public morality and health. The international aspect of the problem is marked by one special feature, the smuggling of spirituous liquors, which no single State can really succeed in suppressing by its own unaided efforts. These considerations led the Finnish, Polish and Swedish Governments to bring up the question at the seventh ordinary session of the Assembly. The authors of the original proposal subsequently had the satisfaction of seeing that proposal supported by the Belgian, Danish and Czechoslovak Ministers for Foreign Affairs. The Foreign Ministers of these six States sent a joint letter to the Secretary-General urging the serious investigation of this problem. As the question is included in the agenda of the present session of the Assembly, I shall confine myself to this statement, convinced as I am that the Assembly will devote to this proposal the attention which it deserves.

**The President :**

*Translation :* M. Akel, head of the Estonian delegation, will address the Assembly.

**M. Akel (Estonia) :**

*Translation :* Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen — I will not take up the time of this august Assembly with a survey of the work done by the League of Nations — work which, without exception, has given deep satisfaction to and evoked the gratitude of my Government. I fully endorse the glowing tributes bestowed upon the League by the previous speakers.

Among the many questions dealt with in the report which we are now considering — a report which shows the full scope of the beneficent work of the League on behalf of peace and international co-operation — there is one question of special interest to Estonia: I refer to the powerful help and support given by the League with a view to facilitating banking and currency reform in my country, and for which I have the honour to express here, in the name of my Government, our deepest gratitude.

For a just appreciation of the help and support given to my country, it would be necessary to retrace the main features of the economic and financial development of Estonia since it first won its independence and concluded peace with Soviet Russia in 1920 — a development described with remarkable completeness and accuracy in the report by the Financial Committee of the League in 1925.

The conclusions and recommendations contained in that report once more show that Estonia had, on the whole, succeeded in stabilising its economic situation and in preserving its budgetary balance, but that the currency still had to be reorganised in order to complete the economic recovery of the country.

The conclusions reached by the Financial Committee showed that a foreign loan would be desirable in order to give effect to the suggested banking and currency reform. The plan for that reform and for the flotation of the contemplated loan was worked out and defined in a Protocol signed at Geneva on December 10th, 1926.

The approval of the Council having been obtained, nothing further remained to prevent the execution of the plan. The loan was floated with signal success. Thus, through its permanent organs, the League of Nations showed to Estonia sympathy of the most practical kind at a time when that country was endeavouring to restore its currency and banking.

The deep and sincere gratitude of Estonia towards the League can but increase my country's faith in this union of the nations. In the strengthening of that union Estonia sees the surest safeguard of peace and international co-operation, based on right and the consciousness of mutual dependence.

Estonia has unshakable faith in the League's future, and will always be guided in her policy by the ideals of peace which animate that body.

The Estonian Government is firmly resolved to preserve close co-operation with the League, and congratulates itself on the results already achieved. It will always be ready to contribute to the full extent of its power to the further development of the League's work.

I devoutly hope that the way is short which still separates this noble institution from universality, and that the day will soon dawn when we shall see gathered here all the nations of the world in a spirit of international co-operation, peace and understanding.

**The President :**

*Translation :* I call upon M. Cielens, first delegate of Latvia, to address the Assembly.

**M. Cielens (Latvia) :**

*Translation :* Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen — I must first of all appeal to your indulgence for my boldness in addressing you on the great and comprehensive questions of peace, security and disarmament. I feel I owe you an apology, because I represent a small and politically young nation, which only achieved its present political independence in consequence of the events of the world war. But, on the other hand, it is the very fact that I represent a small nation which urges me to say a few words on the momentous question of peace, security and disarmament.

If we ask ourselves what was the chief object of the League of Nations at the time of its foundation, the only answer is that that object was the solution of the great problems I have just enumerated. It has, indeed, accomplished great work in other spheres: it has studied economic, social, philanthropic and humanitarian questions in their international bearings, and its work in these fields meets with my unstinted admiration, for these are indeed questions of high importance, although they do not constitute the essential work of the League.

To the clear and unambiguous question how the League of Nations has approached, discussed and solved the problems of vital importance, we may give the following answer:

From the foundation of the League until 1924, the policy pursued was to define these problems in their concrete aspects and thereupon try to solve them. The year 1924 marked the culminating point reached by the League along that course.

The Geneva Protocol included formulas which, although practical, were not devoid of idealism and which placed these vital problems on a concrete basis. The whole world greeted the Protocol, which, it was hoped, was to establish the long-awaited general and lasting peace and give security to all nations, large and small, and which above all would enable the delicate and complex problems of disarmament to be approached from a practical and concrete point of view. Unfortunately, the Protocol has remained a mere pigeon-holed record.

Since 1924, we have, through lack of system and method, gradually fallen from the heights to which we had risen, until to-day, if we survey the political situation of Europe and attempt

to examine what formula of peace, security and disarmament should replace the Geneva Protocol, we are forced to recognise that the situation has become almost identical with that existing before the war.

For what are the existing guarantees for the security of nations? What are the adequate guarantees for a general, lasting and well-organised peace? How does the problem of disarmament present itself to-day?

The solution of the problem of security, as outlined in the Protocol, has, as far as the States Members of the League of Nations are concerned, been replaced by the Locarno Agreements. These Agreements have doubtless benefited the countries of Western Europe: they have established peace and increased security. But Western Europe is not the whole of Europe, still less the whole of the world. Now the problem of security is one which confronts every nation and every Member of the League, and it is of still graver moment for States which, owing to the geographical situation, have for neighbours countries which, unfortunately, do not yet belong to the League. Nevertheless, the security, as well as the political situation of these countries, fails to arouse much interest.

In other respects the Locarno Agreements, and specially Annex F, have also led to notable results, for this Annex provides an authoritative interpretation of Article 16 of the Covenant. It is not my purpose to consider this interpretation as such. I will only say that it has been, and will continue to be, of importance, for the principle of equality among all the Members of the League is a principle which must be upheld.

For our part we have drawn certain inferences from the existing situation. We have discussed, examined and sought for solutions of the problem of security and peace, in so far as it lay in our power to do so. In the first place we endeavour, in our relations with our great eastern neighbour, to establish peace and to arrive at some formula which, although of but relative value, might help to establish our security. Negotiations are now in progress between us with a view to concluding — in full loyalty to the spirit of the League — a pact of non-aggression and conciliation intended to stabilise peace and the *status quo* on the eastern shores of the Baltic.

We are sparing no effort to ensure that all our neighbours shall have free access to the sea for economic purposes. We shall continue to do so and to vouchsafe to all countries the free use of the international highways of Estonia.

We have also had in mind a "Locarno Agreement of the East". Such an agreement would guarantee the *status quo* on the eastern shores of the Baltic, in full accord with the resolution adopted by the seventh ordinary session of the Assembly on September 25th, 1926, which was considered afresh by the Council at its session of December 1926. We may some day be in a position to submit the question in a concrete form to the States interested in the *status quo* and in freedom of traffic on the main international highways of Eastern Europe.

We realise, however, that our political efforts to achieve a stable peace and an increase of security cannot unaided lead to decisive results. The problem is more far-reaching and must be solved by international agreements. We are thus naturally led to the second question of the Protocol, namely, that of a general and lasting peace.

The Latvian Government is of opinion that it is not merely our right but our bounden duty to bring this question clearly and emphatically to the notice of this Assembly. For our country has suffered from the Great War more, perhaps,

than any other country in Europe. For three years two powerful armies brought ruin and destruction upon our country. The line of fire swept it from end to end. Free from social unrest, in peace and in spirit of fairness to the rights of minorities, we are applying ourselves to the reconstruction and development of our young country.

Not only Latvia, but all nations, great and small, feel in the work of economic reconstruction the vital need for the stable peace which is essential for the normal development of trade and international credit.

But where is that peace, that general, lasting, well-organised peace to be found? I need not mention the economic competition, not to say struggle, which is the rule throughout the world in the scramble for cotton, petrol, rubber and other commodities. Nor need I refer to the political rivalries, chiefly noticeable among the great nations, but which also exist between great and small nations. It is not for me to enumerate the differences which have arisen among a number of nations in regard to their political interests.

Unhappily, the main argument brought forward for the settlement of such differences is, without exception, the appeal to brute force. In some cases, even, threats of military action have been uttered. The pre-war method is still looked upon almost universally as the most logical for the purpose of achieving the object in view.

I know it may be said that I am exaggerating; that I am prone to scepticism and that this attitude no longer accords with the present situation in Europe. In a leading article on the eighth ordinary session of the Assembly of the League which appeared in a great French newspaper, we read that there is no great conflict of political interests in Europe, or at any rate there is no divergence of political interests which might lead to war.

But the great poet Sophocles, if I am not mistaken, says in his *Oedipus Rex*, in words which are now proverbial: "The greatest misfortune of man is that when he gazes upon a calm and even sea, he never bethinks him of the storm."

The sea we gaze upon is at present moderately calm, and we never think of the storm that may arise. Yet the League of Nations should be like a seismograph accurately recording the least inward movements of the souls of nations. It should foresee, it should have prescience of, events which, like the great war in July 1914, suddenly sweep like a devastating hurricane over the world.

I now propose to discuss the third problem, namely, that of disarmament, the gravest and the most complex of all, and I regret to find that its solution has still only reached the stage of a draft filed among the League's records.

What are the facts? What is the practical solution of the disarmament problem?

In 1926 the sums budgeted for the military, naval and air forces of the European States amounted to 1,443 million dollars, a sum approximately equal to the European war budget for 1913. The number of soldiers with the colours was 3,145,000 in 1926, whereas the figure for 1913 was slightly higher, being about four million.

We must not forget, however, that under existing treaties part of Europe is now disarmed, and also that the technical equipment of armies is far more advanced than in the days before the war, owing to the considerable progress made in military technique during, and especially since, the war.

I will not weary you by enumerating all the machine-guns, tanks and other engines of war with which modern armies are equipped. It will

suffice to say a few words of the means of offence which will be employed in future warfare, namely, poison gas and electricity, the full possibilities of which for war purposes are perhaps known only to those specialists—and they are bound to secrecy—who are attached to the General Staffs.

How terrible will be the destructive power possessed by such armies! We are no specialists on such questions, yet we can visualise what that power will be; for gas bombs, carried by long-distance aeroplanes, may create havoc not hundreds but thousands of kilometers from the front-line trenches, among the civilian populations of nations at war.

Such is the true situation; and when we investigate the reasons adduced by the experts of the different nations in justification of this competition in armaments, we find the same classical arguments now as before the war. Military strength guarantees peace; military strength guarantees stability; and these are the essential methods guaranteeing general peace and stability.

How then do we stand? We are in the state of armed peace which existed before the war. We have once more the same competition, or rather the same rivalry, in armaments which has in the past led to the terrible consequences that are still fresh in our minds.

Must I remind you that numerous historians and many politicians, publicists and prominent persons connected with the League have expressed their belief that the immediate cause of the world war was competition in armaments?

What is taking place to-day? If these traditional methods are continued, if the champions of a policy of peace and disarmament are overruled, sooner or later we shall once more stumble into war. Alas, that once more we should claim to safeguard the security of nations by the nefarious policy of armaments!

If rivalry in armaments cannot bring security to the small nations, it will likewise fail to bring it to the larger ones too in the war of the future, waged as it will be with aeroplanes, poison gas and electricity.

I am no prophet; but you may be sure that another war would be terrible, not merely owing to its destructive power, but also, and mainly, because all nations, all continents, the whole world, in fact, would be dragged into its whirlpool.

Nor can we ignore the political consequences to which another European war might lead. It would beyond doubt stir up those elements of revolt in every race, the first distant mutterings of which may be heard even now by those who listen.

A militarist policy, therefore, a policy which consists in constantly increasing armaments, does not confer on the world the blessing of a stable peace, nor does it increase the security of nations or provide any guarantee for the safe evolution of civilisation.

Some will perhaps say: What futile sentimentality! or, What scepticism! or again, What lofty idealism—lofty, yes, but impracticable!

Ladies and gentlemen, I know as well as you that the solution of the problem of disarmament is a complex, a difficult, a momentous task; yet, great as it is, the moral greatness of the goal in view is no less.

The general situation in Europe after the war is particularly favourable to a solution of the problem of disarmament. All nations alike are labouring under economic difficulties, and, as I have said, part of Europe is already disarmed. Furthermore, there is one great Eastern European

nation which is weakened in its military resources, as compared with its position before the war. I am very sure that, if the principal Powers of Western Europe could agree upon a concrete scheme for the reduction and limitation of armaments, either through or under the authority of the League, there would be some hope of inducing the nations which are not yet Members of that organisation to subscribe to such an agreement, for the League would then have an immense, nay an overwhelming, prestige.

The agenda of this Assembly unfortunately contains no such draft agreement framed in concrete terms. Yet this is the main question before it, and the one which ought to have precedence of all others. I am convinced that its solution might offer a basis for the solution of the other problems bound up with a lasting peace and the security of nations.

In the draft agenda of the Third Committee communicated to us on our arrival at Geneva, we find, to our regret, nothing beyond the following question: "What measures should be taken to facilitate the meeting of the Council of the League of Nations in case of political emergency", that is to say, in case of an imminent or actual outbreak of war.

How far we are from the Protocol of 1924! We may even have come down already to the level of these celebrated conferences held at The Hague before the war.

Let us imagine for a moment a crisis such as would be discussed by the Third Committee. When the dark clouds of war are already hovering over Europe it will be too late to attempt such measures of rescue. It will be too late for the Council of the League to solve the political crisis; the voice of the cannon will already be heard.

A general peace, a lasting peace, demands preparation. Unless the question of disarmament is solved, the organisation of a general and lasting peace will be an impossible task.

The applause which greeted the eloquent speech of the Netherlands delegate—and I welcome with all my heart the draft resolution deposited by him yesterday—proves that the great hopes to which three years ago the high-minded authors of the Geneva Protocol gave expression are still alive in this Assembly.

In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, allow me to quote from Schiller's famous poem, "The Song of the Bell", the momentous words: "*Vivos voco, Mortuos plango*". I am strongly tempted to say "*Vivos plango*"; for pitiable indeed will be the plight of the generation that comes after us if we ourselves prove unequal to the task of solving the great and difficult problem of peace.

"*Mortuos voco*": I recall the ten million soldiers who fell on the field of battle. They stand before us, nor will their image vanish from our sight until our great object has been attained. Everlasting rest will not be theirs until the League of Nations has established on earth the reign of real and universal peace.

The President:

Translation: M. Löfgren, first delegate of Sweden, will address the Assembly.

M. Löfgren (Sweden):

Translation: Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen—I venture to make a few remarks on this year's annual report, which gives a general and highly interesting account of the work of the Council and of the Secretariat, and I shall speak not only of what the report contains but above all of what it omits.

There is no doubt that as regards economics, finance, health and other fields, the extensive and energetic work of the League is still meeting with success.

All this work, which, in special directions, aims at mitigating the after-effects of the world war, is obviously — from the point of general politics — of the greatest importance also for the establishment and maintenance of friendly relations between peoples. But, on the other hand, the report says little or nothing concerning the measures taken by the League with a view to exercising a more direct influence on the political situation. Unfortunately, this silence does not warrant the conclusion that we live in a world to which, after long years of conflict, calm and peace have at length returned.

On the contrary, it is undeniable that during the past year serious disputes and grave misunderstandings have arisen to divide the peoples and disturb their mutual relations. What the report says — and omits to say — on this subject merely shows that the League has not considered it advisable to intervene in these disputes. In view of their nature and of the League's present position, however, I will not venture to express any opinion on the Council's attitude in the matter. Perhaps the Council showed its wisdom and prudence in remaining inactive, and, indeed, League intervention was not expressly claimed by any of the States Members.

Nevertheless, it cannot be concealed that the apparent passivity which has characterised the political work of the Council during the past year has not failed to occasion a feeling of disappointment. This feeling — I might even call it one of impatience — is perhaps accentuated by the fact that during 1925 and 1926 the work of the League was particularly fruitful in results. The Locarno Treaties and the admission of Germany to the League gave rise to the hope that, in spite of the simultaneous — and, may we hope, temporary — loss of certain Members, the strength and prestige of the League would be increased. The Council's prompt and successful intervention in the Greco-Bulgarian dispute led us to believe that its action in this question would constitute a precedent for similar cases.

The hope, this confidence in the League, are resources which must not be wasted. The League must therefore neglect no opportunity of inspiring the most complete confidence in its will and power not only to perfect a system for the organisation of peace in the future, but also to settle any current disputes or any disputes which may arise in the future. Public opinion desires, therefore, a programme, a fundamental principle for the political conduct of the League's organs in their constant work of mediation in accordance with Article 11 of the Covenant.

In this respect it might be pointed out that the League is so deeply interested in the theoretical discussion of Article 16 of the Covenant — that is to say, of repressive measures in the event of war — that Article 11, the aim of which is to prevent war, has been somewhat thrust into the background. Would it not be useful for the Council to apply in a more general manner that procedure of conciliation which has been recognised and confirmed by so many States in separate treaties? Certainly for the moment general peace is not threatened, but is it not dangerous to defer until to-morrow the solution of problems which might be settled to-day with a greater measure of safety?

The Swedish and other Scandinavian delegations have more than once suggested to the Assembly that there should be more definite regulations

for the Council's mediation procedure. Such regulations would also have the advantage of providing the public with an assurance that current questions of a political nature would be dealt with by the Council itself. If the newspapers and the accounts of various interviews which have taken place are to be credited, burning political questions have been discussed here at Geneva at meetings at which only certain members of the Council were present. Of course, nobody would think of blaming statesmen for discussing separately problems which directly concern their own country, even if such problems come within the competence of the League.

But, frankly, last year's experience was not such as to dispel the apprehensions of those who, at the last Assembly, expressed the opinion that an increase in the membership of the Council would enhance the danger of important political questions being withdrawn from its competence and transferred to an inner circle of representatives of certain Powers.

I need not say that, if this tendency were to increase, the League of Nations and its executive organ, the Council, might quite conceivably lose their hold on affairs and be prevented from accomplishing their high mission as the guardians of peace.

In speaking of the Council's work I will venture to add a few words concerning a question which is of vital importance, especially for small States. I wish to emphasise that, in whatever manner the Council's conciliation procedure is organised and applied, political mediation must be kept distinct from arbitration as contemplated by the Covenant and by individual treaties.

As you know, we have succeeded in developing and strengthening the system for the pacific settlement of international disputes. The League has given this system support, the importance of which can hardly be overestimated. We have seen the network of arbitration treaties spreading farther and farther, bringing closer together the various States of Europe and of the world. In order that this network should continue to extend, nothing must be done to shake the confidence of Governments in the efficacy of arbitration, even in disputes bearing on interests which one or other of the parties considers to be vital.

According to the spirit of the Covenant, it is obvious that, once arbitration proceedings have been instituted, any political intervention by the Council must be ruled out, unless, of course, respect for undertakings has to be enforced or the execution of such undertakings ensured.

The idea that any decision taken by an arbitral tribunal could be considered as a reason for political intervention by the Council, involving, if necessary, the interruption of the arbitration proceedings, appears to me contrary not only to general legal principles but also to the ideas on which the arbitration system of the Covenant is based.

Since arbitration is the essential condition for the establishment of a system of security leading to disarmament, it is all the more important that the ever-growing confidence in its efficacy should not be shaken.

The limitation of armaments is one of the lengthiest tasks upon which the League of Nations has embarked. No matter how disappointed we are at the present position of the problem, we must in fairness pay a tribute to the tireless zeal displayed by the various organs and authorities of the League in striving to reach a solution of this problem.

The present disquieting position of the disarmament problem is due to the divergent interests and

conceptions of the various sovereign States. These divergencies should not, however, discourage the League in the pursuit of its work. Nothing would be more fatal for the League than to leave the impression that this problem has come to a deadlock without hope of a remedy.

Nevertheless, if the work is to be pushed forward, it is not enough, in my opinion, to convene the Preparatory Commission at an early date, since, unless new facts arise, the Commission could surely do no more than take note once again of the existing differences.

In view of the very considerable technical results already obtained, I think the moment is ripe for us to try to find political guarantees ensuring an agreement which it has not yet been found possible to reach. Above all — and the League of Nations has the right to claim this much — the Powers whose divergencies of opinion have prevented the successful issue of previous negotiations, must make the concessions necessary to lay down the required basis for a general and definitive agreement. This Assembly, I am sure, will not fail, after carefully studying what measures are to be adopted, to express firmly and clearly its will to take a decisive step towards the solution of this problem.

If the Assembly takes this line it will, I hope, mean that the delegates — in particular, those of great military Powers — will be bound to exercise their influence in their respective countries with a view to bringing their Government's official policy into line with League principles.

In the same way, steps have been taken and preparatory work of the utmost importance has been accomplished in another sphere in which a *rapprochement* among the nations can clear the ground for a durable peace — I mean the economic sphere. At the Economic Conference convened by the League at Geneva, opinion was found to be strongly in favour of a freer commercial policy and, in particular, of the abolition of the economic and social barriers erected between countries after the world war.

The principles laid down by the Economic Conference for a future commercial policy were recommended by the Council at its June session this year to the favourable consideration of all Governments. Accordingly, the German, Austrian, Belgian, Netherlands and Czechoslovak Governments formally approved the Conference's resolutions, and representatives of the British, Italian and Roumanian Governments also accepted them.

Lastly, the principal achievement of two important Conferences held at Stockholm — the Conference of the International Chamber of Commerce and the World Congress of the International Co-operative Alliance — was to place on record unanimous resolutions urging the necessity of taking as a basis for international economic co-operation the principles enunciated at the Economic Conference of Geneva.

The experts on economic disarmament did not therefore display the same lack of unanimity as the experts on military disarmament. As regards economic policy, they all agreed that

the world can only emerge from the present protracted and serious crisis by a policy of liberty and co-operation. But, in order to give the Conference's decisions the full effect they deserve, it is essential that the great majority of States should put them into practice. The League of Nations must therefore follow up the action taken under its auspices, by bringing about an association of States with a view to obtaining the requisite co-operation.

As regards Sweden, I think I may say that her commercial policy is, in all essential points, in complete agreement with the principles adopted by the Conference. I venture, however, to point out how difficult, how impossible even, it is for individual States, especially secondary Powers, to continue to apply such principles to their commercial policy, unless those principles are generally adopted at the outset by the States whose economic influence is greatest.

The Swedish Government takes this opportunity to say that it fully adheres to the principles set forth by the Economic Conference and that it is prepared to work for their general application. Sweden addresses an urgent and sincere appeal to the Assembly of the League of Nations, to the States Members of the League, and more especially to those Members who play a predominating part in the economic life of the world, to set to work immediately to render possible the universal application of the recommendations of the Economic Conference by means of inter-State agreements as well as by the general direction of their commercial policy.

## 25. — APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE DELEGATES TO THE FINNISH DELEGATION : LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE DELEGATION.

The President :

*Translation* : Before closing the meeting, I will read you a letter I have received from the Finnish delegation regarding the composition of that delegation :

"I have the honour to inform you that, in accordance with Article 6, paragraph 1, of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly, the Finnish delegation to the eighth session of the Assembly has appointed the following as substitute delegates :

M. George WINCKELMANN, Counsellor of Legation, Director of the Legal Section at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

M. Hugo VALVANNE, First Secretary of Legation.

(Signed) R. ERICH,

*Head of the Finnish Delegation  
to the eighth ordinary session  
of the Assembly.*"

The Assembly rose at 12.40 p.m.