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STATEMENT

BY THE
DISARMAMENT COMMITTEE
OF THE
WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

in relation to the
CONFERENCE FOR THE REDUCTION
and
LIMITATION OF ARMAMENTS

Secretariat: 25, Quai du Mont-Blanc, Geneva
Tel. 24.367

Pamphlet

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PREFACE

In September 1931, the great International Organisations of Women, assembled in special session, pledged themselves by every means in their power to assist the coming Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments by endeavouring to organise the vast and growing public opinion in favour of the Conference and of the realisation of universal disarmament and security for all nations.

This action led to the creation of the Disarmament Committee of the Women's International Organisations, a body composed of the representatives of fourteen international organisations, and one powerful national federated organisation,* which have branches in fifty-six countries with a combined membership of some forty-five million women. The headquarters of this Committee were placed in Geneva, and its first undertaking was the collection and presentation to the Conference of petitions signed by some eight millions of men and women of all countries asking for world disarmament at the earliest possible date. This effort had been initiated, eighteen months previously, by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in co-operation with thirteen other international organisations and one large national federation, and the formal presentation of these Petitions was finally made to the Conference on Saturday, February 6th, 1932.

This task being accomplished, further plans were then formulated for a working programme towards the realisation of disarmament and it was felt that the first need was for a unified expression of women's agreement upon specific aspects of this subject. Accordingly the following Statement was drafted and formally accepted by the qualified representatives of the constituent organisations at a meeting of the Committee held in Geneva on February 23rd, 1932. This document was then approved by the higher executive of each international organisation and is now being forwarded to national sections for further study and consideration.

* The National Committee on the Cause and Cure of War, which, being a national body, is now in process of studying this document. This organisation is a federation of eleven important national women's organisations in the United States of America.

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This Statement is designed as a basis for a working programme which, given the actual circumstances, lays down general lines upon which judgments can be formed as the discussion develops in the various sessions of the Conference. It does not represent the interests of any particular nation, or of any particular group of nations, nor of any particular section of the peace movement. It aims at representing the greatest measure of women's agreement upon defined and essential propositions, at the same time making it clear that this Conference must be the first of a series whose final aim is total disarmament by general agreement guaranteeing security and re-establishing confidence. It has been drafted after much careful discussion and exchange of opinions, and while it cannot possibly represent all the views of the organisations united in the Disarmament Committee of the Women's International Organisations, it is believed that, as the result of these discussions, it harmonizes different points of view and summarizes the general consensus of opinion upon this difficult and acute problem.

Thus, while we realise that this document may only give partial satisfaction to each of our constituent members, nevertheless we, as representatives of international organisations, have felt increasingly that we must hold an objective point of view and place individual aspirations at the service of mutual co-operation. Therefore in bringing this Statement to your attention may we appeal for your assistance in our effort to stimulate a wider spirit of conciliation whereby national idealism will rise triumphant to embrace a vision of vital necessities and universal interests.

DISARMAMENT COMMITTEE
OF THE WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

OFFICERS

President :	Mary A. DINGMAN
Vice-Presidents :	L. DREYFUS-BARNEY Kathleen COURTNEY
Secretary :	Rosa MANUS
Asst. Secretary :	Dorothy A. HENEKER
Treasurer :	Clara Guthrie d'ARCIS

Secretariat : 25, Quai du Mont-Blanc, Geneva — Tel. 24.367

ORGANISATIONS

In French alphabetical order :

1. International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship.
President : Mrs. Margery Corbett Ashby.
Secretariat : 190 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London S. W. 1.
2. World's Young Women's Christian Association.
President : Jonkvrouwe C. M. van Asch van Wÿck.
Secretariat : 2, rue Daniel Colladon, Geneva.
3. National Committee on the Cause and Cure of War.
President : Miss Ruth Morgan.
Secretariat : 1015 Grand Central Terminal Building, New York, N. Y.
4. International Council of Women.
President : The Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair.
Secretariat : 49, rue Saint-Georges, Paris 9^e.
5. European Federation of Soroptimist Clubs.
President : Dr. S. Noël.
Secretariat : 31, rue Marbeuf, Paris.
6. International Federation of Business and Professional Women.
President : Miss Lena Madesin Phillips.
Secretariat : 2, route de Malagnou, Geneva.

In French alphabetical order :

7. International Federation of University Women.
President: Professor W. Cullis, C.B.E., M.A., D.Sc.
Secretariat: Crosby Hall, Cheyne Walk, London, S.W. 3.
8. International Co-operative Women's Guild.
President: Frau Emmy Freundlich.
Secretariat: Stanfield House, Prince Arthur Road, London N.W. 3.
9. League of Iberian and Latin-American Women.
President: Senora Carmen de Burgos.
Secretariat: Calle Nicasio Gallego 1, Madrid.
10. League of Jewish Women.
President: Madame C. Lebach.
Secretariat: 12, rue des Pitons, Geneva.
11. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.
President: Miss Jane Addams.
Secretariat: 12, rue du Vieux Collège, Geneva.
12. World Organisation of Jewish Women.
President: Mrs. Alexander Kohut.
Secretariat: 625 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y.
13. World's Women's Christian Temperance Union.
President: Mrs. Ella A. Boole.
Secretariat: 32, The Ridgeway, Golder's Green, London N.W. 11.
14. World Union of Women for International Concord.
President: Madame Clara Guthrie d'Arcis.
Secretariat: 17, Boulevard Helvétique, Geneva.

and its affiliated organisation :
15. League of Mothers and Educators for Peace.
Secretary general: Madame Eidenschenk-Patin.
Secretariat: Berny-Rivière par Vic s/Aisne, Aisne, France.

STATEMENT

BY THE
DISARMAMENT COMMITTEE OF THE WOMEN'S
INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN RELATION
TO THE CONFERENCE FOR THE REDUCTION
AND LIMITATION OF ARMAMENTS.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

This Statement was accepted by representatives of the Women's International Organisations in Geneva, at a meeting of their Disarmament Committee held on February 23rd, 1932.

It is not intended as a full Disarmament programme, nor can it possibly represent all the views of the organisations united in the Disarmament Committee of the Women's International Organisations.

It is designed to form a basis for a working programme which, given the actual circumstances, lays down general lines upon which judgments can be formed as the discussion develops in the Disarmament Conference now sitting.

We recognize that there are many aspects of the Disarmament problem, including "economic" and "moral" disarmament, but we are here and now concerned with actual measures for material disarmament and what follows refers mainly to those. It is hoped to issue shortly special memoranda on the subject of moral disarmament and other points raised in this Statement.

General Statement.

We support the statement made by the President to the Conference in his opening address in which he said that the task before them was :

- a) To arrive at a collective agreement on an effective programme of practical proposals speedily to secure a substantial reduction and limitation of all national armaments.
- b) To determine that no armaments may be maintained outside the scope of that treaty by which all nations represented here are to make the achievement of universal disarmament their common aim.
- c) To ensure continuity of advance towards our ultimate goal, without detracting in any way from the fullest measure of success of our immediate effort, by planning the holding of similar conferences at reasonably short intervals of time.

We are convinced that the present colossal scale of armaments is not only an intolerable financial burden and a contributory cause of the present economic crisis, but is a direct menace to peace and a hindrance to the development of a just international order, and we claim that the Convention to be concluded by the first World Disarmament Conference must provide for an effective reduction of all armaments.

Further, we support disarmament on the basis of equal rights and security for all nations in accordance with Art. VIII of the Covenant and ask that the measures embodied in the Convention shall have regard to this principle.

We have no belief in the possibility of humanising warfare nor of defending civil populations from poison gases or other modern methods of waging war. The only safety lies in the abolition of war itself.

Specific Proposals.

Private Manufacture and Traffic in Armaments.

We emphasize the vital importance of national and international control of the traffic in armaments and urge that measures providing for this should be agreed to during the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments.

We view with horror the abuses connected with the private profits derived from the manufacture of arms and ammunition. We believe that these should be made impossible, and we ask for international and national supervision of the private and state manufacture of arms and ammunition ; such manufacture to be subjected to a system of licensing and publicity.

Aerial, Chemical and Bacteriological Warfare.

Inasmuch as war from the air, together with the use of poison gas, threatens with terror and death not only the adult population, civil as well as military, but also the childhood of the world, it especially concerns women as the natural guardians of the home life of the people.

It is, moreover, a method of warfare from which there is no defence, which is in process of rapid development and is likely to predominate over all others ; we are therefore convinced that no Disarmament Convention will achieve its purpose if it does not deal radically with this danger.

Accordingly we ask :

That Military and Naval Aircraft be abolished ;

That effective international measures against the militarisation of civil aviation be organised ;

That government appropriations and preparations for, as well as the use of, chemical and bacteriological warfare be prohibited, and that existing stocks destined for use in warfare be destroyed. ¹

Abolition of Aggressive Weapons.

We urge further that the instruments of war generally regarded as weapons of offence be abolished.

The abolition of these weapons would begin to effect some equalisation between all States and would thus make a contribution to the solution of the problem of disarmament on the basis of equal rights and security for all peoples, in accordance with Article VIII of the Covenant.

¹ The Committee suggests the study of the possibility of the international supervision of chemical industries.

Budgetary Limitation.

We regard it as essential that armaments should be limited, not only directly but also indirectly, by the amount spent upon them.

We therefore support the proposal that each state should undertake to limit the amount budgeted for its armaments and we urge that the amount should be limited separately for each and every category of armaments.

Permanent Disarmament Commission.

We believe that the observance of the obligations contracted under the Convention should be ensured by a Permanent Disarmament Commission established at the seat of the League of Nations, and exercising its control equally over all nations.

We call attention to the necessity for publicity as to the armaments and armed forces of each country and for adequate information on the subject to be supplied to the Permanent Disarmament Commission.

Confidence and Security.

We recognise that general and radical disarmament, which will in itself help to create confidence, will be more easily achieved if countries, reducing their armaments, have a sense of confidence and security.

Measures to ensure such security are provided in the Covenant of the League of Nations (Articles X, XI, XII, XIII, XV, XVI), and have since been reinforced as, for instance, by

the signing of the Optional Clause of the Permanent Court of International Justice by 37 countries, and the Locarno Treaties, as well as by :

The Briand-Kellogg Pact,
The General Act of Arbitration,
The Convention for Financial Assistance,
The Convention for Improving the Means to Prevent War.

We stand for :

1. The acceptance by all States of the obligation to settle all international disputes, of whatever character, by peaceful means, and the recognition that the nation which resorts to hostilities in defiance of its obligations has stamped itself as the aggressor.

2. The development of a system in harmony with the spirit of the Covenant to provide without resort to force for those economic and political changes which may become necessary in changing world conditions.

3. Effective collective action to prevent, or in the last resort to stop, a breach of world peace.

Moral Disarmament.

We recognise that the above-mentioned measures will not be permanently effective without that moral disarmament which must be achieved by the united efforts of Governments and of peoples.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

TO THE
CONFERENCE FOR THE REDUCTION
AND LIMITATION OF ARMAMENTS

FEBRUARY 6th, 1932

This pamphlet would be incomplete without some reference to the presentation ceremony of February 6th, 1932.

During the eighteen months preceding the opening of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments a world-wide campaign had been carried on to collect signatures from the men and women of all countries to petitions for universal disarmament. This effort was unique in that it represented individual signatures from over eight million men and women from all parts of the world. On the morning of Saturday February 6th, these petitions were formally presented to the Conference by the Disarmament Committee of the Women's International Organisations. Fifty-six countries were represented and the ceremony made a deep impression upon those who witnessed it, many of the official delegates as well as private individuals emphatically stating that the effect of this long line of women moving quietly up the Conference Hall, and of the ever increasing pile of petitions beside the platform, to which each in turn added her contribution, was more impressive than many speeches and gave a convincing proof of the force of public opinion which has not been without its effect on the subsequent meetings of the Conference.

The presentation was closed by the reading of an Address to the Conference in which the President of the Women's Committee said:

“ In the name of our member organisations throughout the world we bring you these petitions. We cannot regard them as a mere bundle

of papers, nor indeed can we contemplate them without emotion ; for they are the expression of an ardent desire, the appeal of a crying need, the desire and the need for peace. The collection of these millions of signatures has been a task calling for much willing and devoted labour. Yet they represent no more than a fraction of the volume of conviction of the urgent necessity for disarmament which is growing on all sides to ever greater proportions. No pains have been spared to make the signing of these petitions an act of deep meaning and sincerity. Behind each of these names stands a living personality, a human being oppressed by a great fear, the fear of the destruction of our civilisation, but also moved by a great will for peace that cannot be ignored and must not be denied”.

“ It has sometimes been urged by politicians that the world is not ready for disarmament. Here at least is the reply of a multitude of men and women from all parts of the world who are determined that nothing shall further delay the fulfilment of the repeated pledges of Governments to carry out a real, general and substantial reduction and limitation of armaments”.

The presentation ceremony over, the petitions were taken to the League of Nations Building and placed on exhibition for the benefit of the general public in the new Disarmament wing. This exhibition has now been made permanent and the petitions are preserved in large glass cases where they can easily be viewed.

And even yet this expression of public opinion continues ! Weekly, and in fact daily, hundreds and thousands of petitions pour in to headquarters signed by men and women from all countries. To-day the total number received is well over nine millions of signatures, and even these do not include the thousands of collective signatures which have been sent in from all over the world.

It seems increasingly true that “ a great vision has become clear to the eyes of this generation — the vision of the forces of humanity working together towards one single aim, towards a new world based on mutual understanding and international goodwill” ; and while we do not shut our eyes to the grave difficulties which have to be met, we feel sure that obstacles, however formidable, are not insurmountable if there is a strong will to overcome them aided by this mighty force of public opinion which is working for the peace of the world.

