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Appeal to Nations of the World on Disarmament, May 16, 1933

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May 16, 1933

FOR THE PRESS

CAUTION: This message of the President to the Sovereigns and Presidents of the Nations participating in the World Economic Conference and the Disarmament Conference is AUTOMATICALLY RELEASED FOR PUBLICATION at 10:00 A.M., Eastern Standard Time today.

Extreme care must be exercised to avoid premature publication.

STEPHEN EARLY  
Assistant Secretary to the President

\* \* \* \* \*

The message was cabled early today direct to the Sovereigns and Presidents of the Nations listed below:

His Majesty  
Zog I,  
King of the Albanians,  
Tirana, Albania.

His Excellency  
Ricardo Jimenez,  
President of Costa Rica,  
San Jose, Costa Rica.

His Excellency  
Agustin P. Justo,  
President of the Argentine  
Nation,  
Buenos Aires, Argentina.

His Excellency  
Lin Sen,  
President of the National  
Government of the Republic  
of China,  
Nanking, China.

His Excellency  
Wilhelm Miklas,  
President of the Confederation  
of Austria,  
Vienna, Austria.

His Excellency  
Gerardo Machado,  
President of the Republic  
of Cuba,  
Habana, Cuba.

His Majesty  
Albert,  
King of the Belgians,  
Brussels, Belgium.

His Excellency  
Thomas G. Masaryk,  
President of  
Czechoslovakia,  
Praha, Czechoslovakia.

His Excellency  
Getulio Vargas,  
President of the United  
States of Brazil,  
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

His Majesty  
Christian X,  
King of Denmark,  
Copenhagen, Denmark.

His Excellency  
Enrique Olaya Herrera,  
President of the Republic  
of Columbia,  
Bogota, Colombia.

His Excellency  
Rafael Leonidas Trujillo,  
President of the  
Dominican Republic,  
Santo Domingo,  
Dominican Republic.

His Excellency  
Daniel Salamanca,  
President of Bolivia,  
La Paz, Bolivia.

His Excellency  
Juan de Dios Martinez Mira,  
President of the Republic  
of Ecuador,  
Quito, Ecuador.

His Majesty  
Boris III,  
King of the Bulgarians,  
Sofia, Bulgaria.

His Majesty  
Fouad I,  
King of Egypt,  
Cairo, Egypt.

His Excellency  
Arturo Alessandri,  
President of the Republic  
of Chile,  
Santiago, Chile.

His Excellency  
Konstantin Pats,  
Head of State,  
Tallinn, Estonia.

His Imperial Majesty,  
Haile Selassie I,  
Emperor of Ethiopia,  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

His Excellency  
Pehr Evind Svinhufvud,  
The President of Finland,  
Helsingfors, Finland.

His Excellency  
M. Albert Lebrun,  
President of the French Republic,  
Paris, France.

His Excellency  
Field Marshal Paul von  
Beneckendorff und von Hindenburg,  
President of the Reich,  
Berlin, Germany.

His Majesty  
George V,  
The King of Great Britain,  
Ireland, and the British  
Dominions beyond the Seas,  
Emperor of India, etc., etc.,  
London, England.

His Excellency  
Alexander Zaimis,  
President of the Hellenic  
Republic,  
Athens, Greece.

His Excellency  
Jorge Ubico,  
President of the Republic  
of Guatemala,  
Guatemala, Guatemala.

His Excellency  
Stenio Vincent,  
President of Haiti,  
Port au Prince, Haiti.

His Serene Highness  
Admiral Nicholas De Horthy,  
Regent of the Kingdom of  
Hungary,  
Budapest, Hungary.

His Excellency  
Tiburcio Carias A.,  
Constitutional President of  
the Republic of Honduras,  
Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

His Majesty  
Faisal I,  
King of Iraq,  
Baghdad, Iraq.

His Majesty  
Victor Emanuel III,  
King of Italy,  
Rome, Italy.

His Majesty  
Hirohito,  
Emperor of Japan,  
Toyko, Japan.

His Excellency  
Alberts Kviesis,  
President of the Republic  
of Latvia,  
Riga, Latvia.

His Excellency  
Antanas Smetona,  
President of the Republic  
of Lithuania,  
Kaunas, Lithuania.

Her Royal Highness  
Charlotte,  
Grand Duchess of Luxembourg,  
Luxembourg, G.D.

His Excellency  
General Abelardo L. Rodriguez,  
President of the United  
Mexican States,  
Mexico City, Mexico.

Her Majesty  
Wilhelmina,  
Queen of the Netherlands,  
The Hague, Netherlands.

His Excellency  
Juan B. Sacasa,  
President of the Republic  
of Nicaragua,  
Managua, Nicaragua.

His Majesty  
Haakon VII,  
King of Norway,  
Oslo, Norway.

His Excellency  
Harmodio Arias,  
President of Panama,  
Panama, Panama.

His Excellency  
Eusebio Ayala,  
President of the Republic  
of Paraguay,  
Asuncion, Paraguay.

His Imperial Majesty  
Reza Shah Pahlevi,  
Shah of Persia,  
Teheran, Persia.

His Excellency  
Ignace Moscicki,  
President of the Republic  
of Poland,  
Warsaw, Poland.

His Excellency  
General Oscar Benavides,  
President of Peru,  
Lima, Peru.

His Excellency  
General Antonio Oscar de  
Fragoso Carmona,  
President of the Republic  
of Portugal,  
Lisbon, Portugal.

His Majesty  
Carol II,  
King of Rumania,  
Bucharest, Rumania.

President Michail Kalinin,  
All Union Central Executive  
Committee,  
Moscow, Russia.

His Majesty  
Prajadhipok,  
King of Siam,  
Bangkok, Siam.

His Excellency  
Alcala Zamora,  
President of the Spanish Republic  
Madrid, Spain.

His Majesty  
Gustaf V,  
King of Sweden,  
Stockholm, Sweden.

His Excellency  
Edmond Schulthess,  
President of the Swiss  
Confederation,  
Berne, Switzerland.

His Excellency  
Gazi Mustafa Kemal,  
President of the Turkish  
Republic,  
Ankara, Turkey.

His Excellency  
Gabriel Terra,  
President of the Republic  
of Uruguay,  
Montevideo, Uruguay.

His Excellency  
Juan V. Gomez,  
President of the United States  
of Venezuela,  
Caracas, Venezuela.

His Majesty  
Alexander I,  
King of Yugoslavia,  
Belgrade, Yugoslavia.

The message follows:

A profound hope of the people of my country impels me, as the head of their government, to address you and, through you, the people of your nation. This hope is that peace may be assured through practical measures of disarmament and that all of us may carry to victory our common struggle against economic chaos.

To these ends the nations have called two great world conferences. The happiness, the prosperity, and the very lives of the men, women and children who inhabit the whole world are bound up in the decisions which their governments will make in the near future. The improvement of social conditions, the preservation of individual human rights, and the furtherance of social justice are dependent upon these decisions.

The World Economic Conference will meet soon and must come to its conclusions quickly. The world can not await deliberations long drawn out. The Conference must establish order in place of the present chaos by a stabilization of currencies, by freeing the flow of world trade, and by international action to raise price levels. It must, in short, supplement individual domestic programs for economic recovery, by wise and considered international action.

The Disarmament Conference has labored for more than a year and, as yet, has been unable to reach satisfactory conclusions. Confused purposes still clash dangerously. Our duty lies in the direction of bringing practical results through concerted action based upon the greatest good to the greatest number. Before the imperative call of this great duty, petty obstacles must be swept away and petty aims forgotten. A selfish victory is always destined to be an ultimate defeat. The furtherance of durable peace for our generation in every part of the world is the only goal worthy of our best efforts.

If we ask what are the reasons for armaments, which, in spite of the lessons and tragedies of the World War, are today a greater burden on the peoples of the earth than ever before, it becomes clear that they are two-fold: First, the desire, disclosed or hidden, on the part of Governments to enlarge their territories at the expense of a sister nation. I believe that only a small minority of Governments or of peoples harbor such a purpose. Second, the fear of nations that they will be invaded. I believe that the overwhelming majority of peoples feel obliged to retain excessive armaments because they fear some act of aggression against them and not because they themselves seek to be aggressors.

There is justification for this fear. Modern weapons of offense are vastly stronger than modern weapons of defense. Frontier forts, trenches, wire entanglements, coast defenses--in a word, fixed fortifications--are no longer impregnable to the attack of war planes, heavy mobile artillery, land battleships called tanks, and poison gas.

If all nations will agree wholly to eliminate from possession and use the weapons which make possible a successful attack, defenses automatically will become impregnable, and the frontiers and independence of every nation will become secure.

The ultimate objective of the Disarmament Conference must be the complete elimination of all offensive weapons. The immediate objective is a substantial reduction of some of these weapons and the elimination of many others.

This Government believes that the program for immediate reduction of aggressive weapons, now under discussion at Geneva, is but a first step toward our ultimate goal. We do not believe that the proposed immediate steps go far enough. Nevertheless, this Government welcomes the measures now proposed and will exert its influence toward the attainment of further successive steps of disarmament.

Stated in the clearest way, there are three steps to be agreed upon in the present discussions:

First, to take, at once, the first definite step toward this objective, as broadly outlined in the MacDonal Plan.

Second, to agree upon time and procedure for taking the following steps.

Third, to agree that while the first and the following steps are being taken, no nation shall increase its existing armaments over and above the limitations of treaty obligations.

But the peace of the world must be assured during the whole period of disarmament and I, therefore, propose a fourth step concurrent with and wholly dependent on the faithful fulfillment of these three proposals and subject to existing treaty rights:

That all the nations of the world should enter into a solemn and definite pact of non-aggression: That they should solemnly reaffirm the obligations they have assumed to limit and reduce their armaments, and, provided these obligations are faithfully executed by all signatory powers, individually agree that they will send no armed force of whatsoever nature across their frontiers.

Common sense points out that if any strong nation refuses to join with genuine sincerity in these concerted efforts for political and economic peace, the one at Geneva and the other at London, progress can be obstructed and ultimately blocked. In such event the civilized world, seeking both forms of peace, will know where the responsibility for failure lies. I urge that no nation assume such a responsibility, and that all the nations joined in these great conferences translate their professed policies into action. This is the way to political and economic peace.

I trust that your government will join in the fulfillment of these hopes.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT