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Speech Drafts: Statement on Disarmament, ca. 1933

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Box 13; Folder = Speech Drafts: Statement on Disarmament, ca. 1933

FDR's First Draft

A generation has passed since death and destruction visited hundreds of millions of human beings in what we call the "World War". At its end countless men and women in all portions of the earth trusted that there might be brought into being a new order of lasting peace between nations.

They have seen the attainment of that ideal grow more remote. A new generation has come of age. It finds itself in common with its fathers and mothers in a world submerged with anxiety, where governments great and small are furiously re-arming, where whole peoples live in constant fear, where physical and economic security is absent for the individual as well as for the state.

In our grandfathers' day standards of conduct between nations had been widely recognized. Gradually and laboriously they had better opportunity for over a period of many centuries, and they were the foundation stones on which relations between civilized nations stood.

Today these standards of conduct are threatened with eclipse. Efforts to restore them, efforts to bring them into perspective with modern conditions have failed.

Moreover, because of the emphasis of science on the practice of war, modern warfare has become infinitely more destructive and cruel than ever before. In the employment of new inventions war today practically involves the destruction of defenseless and civilian population - the slaughter of women and children, of the aged and the helpless - in utter contravention of the rules of warfare which earlier international instruments had laid

down, and in violation indeed of the highest instincts of humanity.

Furthermore economic security and stability the world over has been jeopardized and thrown out of balance by excessive barriers raised against international trade with the result that inequalities of commercial opportunity and unduly provoked international jealousies have caused suffering to a large proportion of the inhabitants of the world.

I have felt warranted in addressing to you this communication because of the seriousness of the situation of this hour. It is my considered belief that unless the nations of the earth by common effort come quickly to a renewed acceptance and observance of those fundamental principles and rules of human conduct which judgment of 19 centuries and the experience of the present demonstrate as wise in governing relations between states, world peace cannot be maintained.

I have been told that because many efforts to improve the prospect of the possibility of world peace have failed, a new effort will likewise fail.

I cannot accept that fallacy as an excuse for failing to make one more appeal.

I do so in the knowledge held by every man and woman in every nation that if new wars break out and no binding international accord then exists, with rules and measures to mitigate their horrors - especially the horrors which will involve civilian populations - no man can say that such war or wars would not destroy all that was salvaged from the last.

Every man and woman in the world today suffers directly or

indirectly from the burdens of ever increasing armaments. The cost consumes an ever increasing share of productive income. It drives governments into debts which can never be liquidated. Such arming in diverting national productive efforts from increasing worth depress and even destroy the higher standards of living which might otherwise be attained. The continuation of this course is undermining the domestic economy and, therefore, the social welfare of the inhabitants of every nation. If then we do nothing to check the course, we face world wide social and economic disaster. Thus we establish a splendid reason for all governments in the interest of their own people and their generations yet unborn to come to agreement upon the limitation and reduction of armaments in order that vast resources now poured into armies and navies may be directed to production which will raise the standards of life and enhance human happiness.

Because many of the nations of the world obviously cannot make complete reversal of their policy of seeking great armies without simultaneously dislocating their whole economic structure, it seems necessary that ways and means should be discussed looking to a gradual transition to an economy of reduced armies and peace. This objective looks to a viewing of the world as a whole - a more mutual use of world resources and improvement and simplification of economic relationships between all peoples.

Finally, for the reason that even though the burden of armaments be greatly lifted and the world exchange of goods be enhanced, war between nations would remain a possible thing. Standards of conduct in warfare itself must be established for the sake of humanity itself.

For all these reasons I submit to you the Ambassadors and Ministers of the nations of the world, for the consideration of your governments, the proposal that all governments at an early date set as their goal a unanimous agreement upon essential fundamental principles carried forward into rules of conduct to be observed by every nation in its relations with every other nation.

Should it be found, as I hope it may, that the other governments of the world are favorably disposed of this suggestion, and should they so desire, the government of the United States will be prepared immediately to request a number of other governments to join it in the formulation of tentative proposals in elaboration of the points above enumerated for subsequent submission to all nations for such disposal as they may in their wisdom determine.

Specifically I do not propose the holding of any general international convention. I do suggest that should this recommendation be found acceptable, the government of the United States will consult with a number of other governments and that jointly they will use their best efforts to reach a common agreement as to the means of proceeding with the problems I have outlined. The results of their common findings would be submitted at the earliest practicable date to all nations for such action as they may be disposed to take.

No individual, no government, no nation can be certain that such consultation will result in the effective outlawing of measures to check the productive armaments, to promote economic security or to insure the adherence to standards of conduct in war.

The effort is at least worth the making.

I recognize that however essential a joint accord on these three subjects is to the human race in its search for peace, political tensions exist today in some parts of the world which must be allayed through negotiations and peaceful adjustment on the part of the nations directly involved. The Government of the United States can play no part in the determination of these political adjustments in which it is not directly involved - the traditional policy of freedom from entangling political difficulties which the government of the United States always maintained and will maintain is well known. But it always seemed to me that every kind of adjustment or readjustment of pressing conflicts, if undertaken, will be more readily attained if the nations as a whole come to general agreement on fundamental principles and policies to which they will adhere in the future.

So also I can express the hope that should the suggestion that I have offered be found acceptable to the other governments of the world, new difficulties and new strife can be adjourned until we all can see more clearly.

Should the suggestion which I have offered be found acceptable to the other governments of the world, I gladly pledge the cooperation of the United States of America in seeking the attainment of the objectives which humanity seeks. The quest of peace under law and fair dealing is imposed by the deepest instincts of mankind. It seeks our help. It deserves success.

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<p> 1. The first principle of disarmament is that it must be general and reciprocal. </p>	<p> 2. The second principle is that disarmament must be based on mutual confidence. </p>
<p> 3. The third principle is that disarmament must be achieved through negotiation. </p>	<p> 4. The fourth principle is that disarmament must be a process, not a single act. </p>
<p> 5. The fifth principle is that disarmament must be based on the interests of all nations. </p>	<p> 6. The sixth principle is that disarmament must be a step towards world peace. </p>
<p> 7. The seventh principle is that disarmament must be a process of continuous negotiation. </p>	<p> 8. The eighth principle is that disarmament must be a process of mutual trust. </p>
<p> 9. The ninth principle is that disarmament must be a process of mutual cooperation. </p>	<p> 10. The tenth principle is that disarmament must be a process of mutual respect. </p>

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Handwritten notes on lined paper, organized into two columns by a vertical line. The text is written in cursive and includes various symbols and numbers. At the top right, there is a small diagram of a flag or banner.

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Handwritten text in cursive script, possibly a name or title.

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THE WHITE HOUSE

My dear Grace Tully