DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

MESSAGE

FROM

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

TRANSMITTING

REQUEST FOR AN APPROPRIATION OF $50,000 TO COVER
THE EXPENSES OF A PREPARATORY COMMISSION
FOR THE DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE, BEING
A COMMISSION TO PREPARE FOR A CONFERENCE ON THE REDUCTION AND
LIMITATION OF ARMAMENTS

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MESSAGE

To the Congress of the United States:

In the message which I had occasion recently to submit to you, I called attention to the agreements recently entered into by a number of European governments under which guaranties of peace were provided and I took occasion to point out that the natural corollary to these treaties should be further international agreements for the limitation of armaments, a work that was so successfully begun at the Washington conference.

The Government of the United States has now been invited by the Council of the League of Nations to send representatives to sit upon a "Preparatory commission for the disarmament conference, being a commission to prepare for a conference on the reduction and limitation of armaments," which has been set up by the council and which is to meet in Geneva, Switzerland, in February, 1926. The purpose of this commission, it is stated, is to make preparations for a conference for disarmament which it is the announced purpose of the council to call at an early date.

It is proposed that the deliberations of the commission shall be directed to such matters as the several factors upon which the power of a country in time of war depends; whether limitation of the ultimate war strength of a country is practicable or whether disarmament should be confined to the peace strength alone; the relative advantages or disadvantages of each of the various forms which reduction or limitation of armament may take in the case of land, sea, and air forces; the standard of measurement of the armament of one country against the armament of another; the possibility of ascertaining whether the armed force of a country is organized in a spirit of aggression or for purely defensive purposes; the consideration of the principles upon which a scale of armament for various countries can be drawn up and the factors which enter into the establishment of those principles, such as communication, resources, geographical situation, population, the vulnerability of frontiers, necessary delays in the transforming of peace armaments into war armaments; criteria, if any, by which it may be possible to distinguish between civil and military aircraft; the military value of commercial fleets; the relation between regional security and disarmament and between regional disarmament and general disarmament.

The matters to be examined by the preparatory commission will, it is stated, touch upon all aspects of the question of disarmament and affect the interests of all of the nations of the world. The council believes that the time has come for studying the practical possibilities of the reduction and limitation of armaments, and expresses the hope that at this time when all of the nations of the world are convinced of a common need, it will be able to count upon the cooperation of the Government of the United States in a work which so closely concerns the peace of the world.
This is neither the time nor the place to discuss the agenda of the preparatory commission or to assess the prospects of any conference or conferences on disarmament or limitation of armament which may later be convened. It is quite sufficient to note at this stage that the United States is merely invited to participate in a preliminary inquiry which may prepare the way for steps of a more definite and formal nature. Whether the conditions and circumstances will prove such as to make it desirable for the United States to attend any conference or conferences which may eventually take place as a result of the labors of the preparatory commission or otherwise is a question which need not now be considered. It is my judgment that so far as this preliminary inquiry is concerned, we ought to give our aid and cooperation to the fullest extent consistent with the policies which we have adopted.

The general policy of this Government in favor of disarmament and limitation of armament can not be emphasized too frequently or too strongly. In accordance with that policy any measure having a reasonable tendency to bring about these results should receive our sympathy and support. The conviction that competitive armaments constitute a powerful factor in the promotion of war is more widely and justifiably held than ever before, and the necessity for lifting the burden of taxation from the peoples of the world by limiting armaments is becoming daily more imperative.

Participation in the work of the preparatory commission involves no commitment with respect to attendance upon any future conference or conferences on reduction and limitation of armaments; and the attitude of this Government in that regard can not be defined in advance of the calling of such meetings. For this reason I deem it advisable to ask the Congress at this time only for such appropriation as may be required to defray the expenses of our participation in the work of the preparatory commission. I therefore recommend that there be appropriated the sum of $50,000 to cover the expenses of participation, in the discretion of the Executive, in the work of the preparatory commission.

CALVIN COOLIDGE.

THE WHITE HOUSE,
Washington, January 4, 1926.