

Final Act of the Second Peace Conference. The Hague, 18 October 1907.

The Second International Peace Conference, proposed in the first instance by the President of the United States of America, having been convoked, on the invitation of His Majesty the Emperor of All the Russias, by Her Majesty the Queen of the Netherlands, assembled on 15 June 1907, at The Hague, in the Hall of the Knights, for the purpose of giving a fresh development to the humanitarian principles which served as a basis for the work of the First Conference of 1899.

The following Powers took part in the Conference, and appointed the delegates named below:

(Here follow the names of delegates)

At a series of meetings, held from 15 June to 18 October 1907, in which the above delegates were throughout animated by the desire to realize, in the fullest possible measure, the generous views of the august initiator of the Conference and the intentions of their Governments, the Conference drew up, for submission for signature by the plenipotentiaries, the text of the Conventions and of the Declaration enumerated below and annexed to the present Act.

- I. Convention for the pacific settlement of international disputes.
- II. Convention respecting the limitation of the employment of force for the recovery of contract debts.
- III. Convention relative to the opening of hostilities.
- IV. Convention respecting the laws and customs of war on land.
- V. Convention respecting the rights and duties of neutral powers and persons in case of war on land.
- VI. Convention relative to the status of enemy merchant ships at the outbreak of hostilities.
- VII. Convention relative to the conversion of merchant ships into warships.
- VIII. Convention relative to the laying of automatic submarine contact mines.
- IX. Convention respecting bombardment by naval forces in time of war.
- X. Convention for the adaptation to naval war of the principles of the Geneva Convention.
- XI. Convention relative to certain restrictions with regard to the exercise of the right of capture in naval war.
- XII. Convention relative to the creation of an International Prize Court.
- XIII. Convention concerning the rights and duties of neutral Powers in naval war.
- XIV. Declaration prohibiting the discharge of projectiles and explosives from balloons.

These Conventions and Declarations shall form so many separate Acts. These Acts shall be dated this day, and may be signed up to 30 June 1908, at The Hague, by the Plenipotentiaries of the Powers represented at the Second Peace

Conference.

The Conference, actuated by the spirit of mutual agreement and concession characterizing its deliberations, has agreed upon the following Declaration, which, while reserving to each of the Powers represented full liberty of action as regards voting, enables them to affirm the principles which they regard as unanimously admitted:

It is unanimous:

1. In admitting the principle of compulsory arbitration.
2. In declaring that certain disputes, in particular those relating to the interpretation and application of the provisions of international agreements, may be submitted to compulsory arbitration without any restriction.

Finally, it is unanimous in proclaiming that, although it has not yet been found feasible to conclude a Convention in this sense, nevertheless the divergences of opinion which have come to light have not exceeded the bounds of judicial controversy, and that, by working together here during the past four months, the collected Powers not only have learnt to understand one another and to draw closer together, but have succeeded in the course of this long collaboration in evolving a very lofty conception of the common welfare of humanity.

The Conference has further unanimously adopted the following Resolution:

"The Second Peace Conference confirms the Resolution adopted by the Conference of 1899 in regard to the limitation of military expenditure; and inasmuch as military expenditure has considerably increased in almost every country since that time, the Conference declares that it is eminently desirable that the Governments should resume the serious examination of this question." It has besides expressed the following 'Voeux':

1. The Conference recommends to the Signatory Powers the adoption of the annexed draft Convention for the creation of a Judicial Arbitration Court, and the bringing it into force as soon as an agreement has been reached respecting the selection of the judges and the constitution of the Court.
2. The Conference expresses the opinion that, in case of war, the responsible authorities, civil as well as military, should make it their special duty to ensure and safeguard the maintenance of pacific relations, more especially of the commercial and industrial relations between the inhabitants of the belligerent States and neutral countries.
3. The Conference expresses the opinion that the Powers should regulate, by special treaties, the position, as regards military charges, of foreigners residing within their territories.
4. The Conference expresses the opinion that the preparation of regulations relative to the laws and customs of naval war should figure in the programme of the next Conference, and that in any case the Powers may apply, as far as possible, to war by sea the principles of the Convention relative to the laws and customs of war on land.

Finally, the Conference recommends to the Powers the assembly of a Third Peace Conference, which might be held within a period corresponding to that which has elapsed since the preceding Conference, at a date to be fixed by

common agreement between the Powers, and it calls their attention to the necessity of preparing the programme of this Third Conference a sufficient time in advance to ensure its deliberations being conducted with the necessary authority and expedition.

In order to attain this object the Conference considers that it would be very desirable that, some two years before the probable date of the meeting, a preparatory committee should be charged by the Governments with the task of collecting the various proposals to be submitted to the Conference, of ascertaining what subjects are ripe for embodiment in an international regulation, and of preparing a programme which the Governments should decide upon in sufficient time to enable it to be carefully examined by the countries interested. This committee should further be entrusted with the task of proposing a system of organization and procedure for the Conference itself.

In faith whereof the Plenipotentiaries have signed the present Act and have affixed their seals thereto.

Done at The Hague, 18 October 1907, in a single copy, which shall remain deposited in the archives of the Netherlands Government, and duly certified copies of which shall be sent to all the Powers represented at the Conference.

(Here follow signatures)

INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

International Committee of the Red Cross