Gentlemen,

Year after year when it resumes its work, the Assembly examines the world situation. All signs of progress and all setbacks are revealed in the reports of the League's technical services. It thus becomes possible to diagnose the prospects of a stable peace or to perceive the clouds which are gathering on the international horizon.

The Seventeenth Assembly met in an atmosphere of uncertainty and anxiety. Tumultuous currents of change are agitating the political and social order. A prolonged struggle is going on between violent tendencies of innovation and the resistance of long-established tradition. There is a crisis in the sphere of law, and it threatens to transform the structure of all our institutions. Conflicting ideologies are sweeping over civilized communities in the form of national upheavals of unprecedented magnitude. In view of these signs of the times it may well be asked whether our civilisations are not on the verge of a final break-up and whether we are not living at one of those moments of history which may compromise for many generations the destinies of the human race.

Such is the account given us by one of our research organisations in its earnest desire to assist in a constructive effort.

In opening your debates, I said that the great needs of the present time continue to be conciliation and mutual understanding, but that we must not be disheartened either by the diversity of our problems or by their unvarying complexity. I added that the Covenant must be amended not only according to forms of law but by restoring its moral influence and by giving it the force required to carry out its resolutions within the limits of prudence and a sense of responsibility.

The time has come for this Assembly to close its discussions and in speaking once more before you it is my duty to summarise the results. We have agreed after hearing a full statement of all the proposals of reform which might strengthen our institution and increase collective security, that no changes can be sanctioned without careful study.

The opinions which I expressed at the outset have been confirmed in the course of our discussions: there are to be no amendments or interpretations going beyond the limits of procedure. All the judgments expressed have shown that the main preoccupation is that of universality. The importance of supplementary agreements and regional conventions has been recognised. The Committee appointed on the above principles will give us the final formula with all the precision and fullness we desire.
The legitimacy of our aspirations for co-ordinating the Briand-Kellogg Pact with the Covenant of the League of Nations and with the pact of non-aggression and conciliation of which we took the initiative has been recognised. The American Declaration of August 3rd was endorsed at the last meeting of July and was finally incorporated in European international public law by the Assembly which had been called together at our request to deal with a difficult situation and safeguard our principles. These principles have been maintained in the constitution of the present Assembly, and I shall always have pleasure in recalling that while I had the honour of presiding over its discussions we preserved them intact. We shall continue our efforts to secure universal acceptance of what was originally an Argentine doctrine. We desire to ensure by conventional means the predominance of right over might in every part of the world. It may be said that in view of the realities of the moment such an attitude is Utopian. It may be greeted with sarcasm. Let us accept this sarcasm but let us recognise that certain tasks must be begun at the end and that this is how all great achievements have been won. By persistence in the pursuit of an ideal that ideal can be attained and converted into a reality.

In opening this Assembly's proceedings I spoke to you of the interdependence of the political, economic and social factors, and I mentioned as an essential condition of securing a stable peace, the removal of monetary anarchy and instability and of the multiple obstacles which stood in the way of the development of trade.

I must draw attention to the aggravation of a disquieting symptom, namely the increase in armaments. The difficulties which stand in the way of restoring the international economic order, the economic depression which persists and the permanent barriers which have been set up intensify egotism and increase a latent state of war. Economic autocracy, and nationalism going beyond all reasonable bounds, maintain the evil and penetrate and dominate the minds of men. When countries are thrown back on themselves, their distrust is accentuated and their suspicion is increased when faced with the great uncertainties of the future. This is the cause of the policy of intense rearmament which absorbs capital and energy in unproductive undertakings, and the only result is to create factors and instruments intended for purely hostile purposes. Rerarmament brings with it the necessity of obtaining raw materials at all costs and in certain cases leads to a policy of forced exportation, which throws the international market into confusion. This creates the illusion that a new economic activity has been fostered, whereas in reality this activity is purely artificial. The spirit of insecurity rules, the contagion of armaments spreads to every State, and an enormous burden caused by the development of armies, air forces and fleets is placed on the shoulders of the nations.

Such is the situation from which all countries are suffering.

The exhortations which I addressed to you in speaking of the interdependence between the social, economic and political factors and in mentioning the monetary situation, reflected the feelings of a whole Continent.
This was clearly shown by the Pan-American Conference which met at Montevideo in 1933 and which carefully considered this problem. It reached definite conclusions which it is my duty to remind you of because they are a promise and a guarantee that you can count on our most sincere co-operation in the work you have decided to undertake.

The resolution adopted by the twenty-one republics of America lays down the lines of a policy whose purpose is to remove the obstacles standing in the way of international trade, and all the nations of the world were invited to support this policy.

It fell to me to preside over the committee in which these declarations were made. I therefore cannot refrain from calling to mind the eminent statesman who represented the great nation of North America in that committee, a man who has dedicated his life to unceasing propaganda in favour of economic liberalism. In order to facilitate his efforts I proposed that a continental mandate should be given to request the competent organs of the London World Economic Conference to co-operate in carrying this initiative into effect. You are all aware of the result of that Conference and of the story of the three painful years which followed its failure.

You will therefore understand, gentlemen, the joy with which we hailed the recent step. I am sure that all the republics of America are prepared to repeat once again what they said in 1933 and that the next Pan-American Conference which is to meet at Buenos Aires will send you words of encouragement and offers of concrete co-operation. You have accepted the plan of economic policy which our continental conference proposed to you. We need not revert to the causes of the earlier failure, nor need we insist on the absolute inadequacy of purely monetary measures which are not accompanied by the economic measures essential to produce an effective revival of trade between all States. You have shown that you understood this and have declared that you are determined to proceed to a real extirpation of the causes. France's attitude gives cause for fresh optimism. Her adoption of immediate measures tending to restore and encourage trade are proof of the sincerity by which she is inspired and stress the leading part she is playing in the orientation of a new policy which may prove to be an historical event. We believe, as the representative of another great State, Great Britain, has also said, that you realise that your effort cannot be confined to a great theatrical gesture announcing to the world a new era of prosperity. We understand that a somewhat slow rhythm may be demanded in view of the prudent policy characterising the decisions of some countries which must co-operate in the revival.

Nevertheless, my best reason for optimism and hope does not lie in the coercion which may be imposed on us by the progression of events.

The supreme guarantee that the work which has been begun will be continued consists in a true vision of the reality which surrounds us. It is the accumulated experience of the past which forms the substance of science and guides the penetrating studies of our Economic Committee whose conclusions
have won the day. The new initiative which aims at the restoration of international trade pre-supposes consultation between States and a concerted will on their part, and necessitates co-operation which alone can be achieved when a profound conviction exists. What we need, gentlemen, is to persuade ourselves that we are making perhaps the last effort to restore equilibrium before we are carried away by a current which is already hurrying us on to the rocks of destruction.

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In the course of our deliberations I have heard distinguished statesmen speak of the temptations of strength, of the fascination of violence and of the conflicts of doctrines which are capable of dividing Europe into two hostile camps as in the wars of religion. I have heard others offer the noble advice that we should show a mutual tolerance so as to prevent problems which are already so complicated from being further envenomed by a conflict between different conceptions of the forms of government. If I may be allowed to quote a profound remark of von Ihering's, institutions are, in my opinion, nothing more than "the outer integuments of social and economic conditions". In order to cure extremism, to prevent explosions of violence in the different factions, to restore order in our universe and to ensure social, international and political peace, we must probe the fundamental causes which bring it about.

Among these you may be sure that we shall find economic reasons and their social consequences. There are ferment of anxiety which can only be removed by continuing on the course which has been initiated at the present Assembly, restoring the equilibrium which has been lost, reviving trade, stimulating production, creating a better social level and a higher standard of life. Here we come to the essential root cause of our troubles - poverty, insecurity, immobilisation of activities anxious to find an outlet, men condemned to soul-destroying idleness.

It is from this that arises a powerful impulse whose true name is subversion. It is the spirit first of dissent, then of protest and later of rebellion, which comes to the surface under different labels - demagogy, anarchy, dictatorship, scepticism of democracy, extremism in all its forms.

No profound conception seems to be in the minds of men as when Marx's "Capital" projected itself upon the modern economic structure, and there are no apostles burning with ideas like those who in former days aroused the enthusiasm of the population on the banks of the Rhine, giving a great impulse to the development of socialism. Only a mediocre literature attempts to disseminate the ideas of the old masters. The masses make no attempt to discern the meaning of a doctrine. In certain cases they allow themselves to be carried away by the crudest instincts.

Let us improve economic conditions and the standard of life, let us raise the social level of mankind, let us set at rest their anxieties, let us give them opportunities of work, let us restore the mechanism of production and stimulate world trade. Let us respect the topographical differences based on the wisdom of nature and on the unequal distribution of production and wealth determining the different stages of economic evolution through which the various peoples are passing. Let us not place heavy artificial obstacles in the way of the free play of all these forces which are the mainspring of international trade. Let us
recognise the interdependence of peoples and the essential
unity which governs the inventiveness and ingenuity of men,
and the incessant development of the applied sciences in fla-
grant contradiction with the attempt to separate them into
selfish and hostile regions.

Only in this way will it be possible to set up a
current which will unite the waters of these hidden streams.
This current will gradually flow from the economic to the
social sphere and from this into the political sphere, and
will finally sweep over the whole of international life
restoring to the world peace and harmony and the equilibrium
which it has lost, bringing back welfare and progress.

But if we wish to examine all the causes and influ-
ences which disturb peace, we shall have to prolong this
analysis. We must endeavour to remove the obstacles which
stand in the way of the universal interchange of products.
We cannot leave those barriers which obstruct the movements
of men between the different continents in their legitimate
desire for progress.

The problem of migration has already come up several
times in urgent form before your various organisations. It
is closely bound up with the colonial question and with that
of raw materials. If we desire to create a new international
organisation which will restore equilibrium and ensure the
stability we have lost, we may be sure that we cannot obtain
it without a new economic organisation in which the demogra-
phic factor plays an essential part.

The Great War has left many questions unanswered,
including that of the countries which contain seething popu-
lations in continual conflict with the principle of terri-
torial integrity and the stability of frontiers, thus main-
taining a perpetual ferment of unrest and uncertainty. This
question can be answered by America. The call which goes
up from its vast areas and its fertile lands to all the
dwellers upon earth has been forgotten. It offers special
facilities owing to its affinities with the European contin-
ent, geographical and climatic, racial and cultural, on the
basis of its development through the centuries. The prospects
which it offers of obtaining with rapidity and certainty the
ends which are desired are great, without presenting the dis-
queting relation which exists between the economic and demo-
graphic problem and that of military conquest and protector-
ates arousing the uneasiness of other countries.

The needs of expansion of certain great modern States
are an undeniable fact, but their satisfaction depends on the
transformation of the old concept of a nationalist colonis-
ing policy into a serene and purely juridical conception of
Pacific settlement and colonisation regardless of nationalism.

No study has yet been made in the light of experience
of the enormous profit which accrues to the mother country
in the form of a strengthening of its own economy, the decon-
gestion of its population, the restoration of energy, and the
increase in the reciprocal balance of payments and commerce.
No sufficient analysis has been made of the close link which
exists between emigration and other problems like that of un-
employment, costly doles or the artificial creation of oppor-
tunities of work being replaced by other opportunities which
are spontaneously offered by a different economic environment. When dealing with raw materials, it has perhaps been forgotten that before making them travel, men must be allowed to travel, without disturbing the structures which differentiate countries according to the stage of social evolution they have reached, apart from any idea of internationalisation. I am profoundly convinced that the day cannot be far off when we shall recognize that the mere necessities of armed peace and the immobilisation of men which it implies will not be able to restrict the natural movement of demographic currents which in their age-long march across the earth and in their historic displacements have often saved civilisations by restoring their equilibrium. We are living in times of strange paradox - on one hand the pressure of population, and on the other the fertile soil and the propitious environment which awaits them. It would be sufficient to remember that the soil and the man who tills it are the central factors of economic evolution.

Gentlemen, a study of determining causes soothes the mind. It convinces us that antagonisms, economic rivalries, international and political disputes, present and future problems distract the nations as if under the impulse of a biological law, but they reveal the existence of a powerful movement in which the forces of progress in their upward march are seeking out a new path. They never proceed in a straight line but they advance in irregular curves beset with obstacles and difficulties.

The effects of all this make themselves felt in the superstructure of political regimes and forms of government. At previous meetings a statesman representing the cultural traditions of a great people reminded us of the duty of mutual respect and of the necessity of taking into account the correlation which each State establishes between the forms which it adopts and the people's will.

It is in this spirit that we contemplate in certain young nations that picture of great agitation which we are witnessing to-day. From the first hour of our independent life we were a republic and a democracy. Amidst the storms which rage around us we are continuing and will continue to serve our hard apprenticeship. We have over other older peoples which have only recently transformed their institutions the advantage of a longer experience. This has strengthened our faith and will keep us to our steadfast course. The sight of this great Assembly further strengthens our determination.

We represent a microcosm of all the nations of the globe. Each one has its own individuality, its autonomy and its own internal will. But when we meet together to debate common interests, when we organise ourselves on an absolutely equal basis, when we pay tribute to the necessity of expressing our desires in our vote, when we bow to the will of the majority, what else do we do than try once more the old system of representation in its essential permanent conditions and foundations? Do we not find that in spite of any defects the representative system is the best which the wit of man has so far devised for the government of communities.