My fellow-countrymen: The treaty of peace has been signed. If it is ratified and acted upon in full and sincere execution of its terms, it will furnish the charter for a new order of affairs in the world. It is a severe treaty in the duties and penalties it imposes upon Germany, but it is severe only because great wrongs done by Germany were to be righted and re- paired; it imposes nothing that Germany cannot do; and she can regain her rightful standing in the world by the prompt and honorable fulfillment of its terms. And it is much more than a treaty of peace with Germany. It liberates great peoples who have never before been able to find the way to liberty. It ends, once for all, an old and intolerable order under which small groups of selfish men could use the peoples of great empires to serve their own ambition for power and dominion. It associates the free govern- ments of the world in a permanent league in which they are pledged to use their united power to maintain peace by maintaining right and justice. It makes international law a reality supported by imperative sanctions. It does away with the right of conquest and rejects the policy of annexation and substitutes a new order under which backward nations, populations which have not yet come to political consciousness, and peoples who are ready for independence but not yet quite prepared to dispense with protection and guidance, shall no more be subjected to the domination and exploitation of a stronger nation, but shall be put under the friendly direction and afforded
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independence but not yet quite prepared to dispense with protection and
guidance, shall no more be subjected to the domination and exploitation of
a stronger nation, but shall be put under the friendly direction and afforded
the helpful assistance of governments which undertake to be responsible to
the opinion of mankind in the execution of their task by accepting the
direction of the League of Nations. It recognizes the inalienable rights
of nationality; the rights of minorities, and the sanctity of religious
belief and practice. It lays the basis for conventions which shall free the
commercial intercourse of the world from unjust and vexations restrictions
and for every sort of international cooperation that will serve to cleanse
the life of the world and facilitate its common action in beneficent services
of every kind. It furnishes guarantees such as were never given or even
contemplated before the fair treatment of all who labour at the daily tasks
of the world.

It is for this reason that I have spoken of it as a great charter
for a new order of affairs. There is ground here for deep satisfaction,
universal reassurance, and confident hope.

WOODROW WILSON