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INTERNATIONAL CONCILIATION

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## CONSULTATIVE MEETING OF FOREIGN MINISTERS OF THE AMERICAN REPUBLICS

SEPTEMBER 23 to OCTOBER 3, 1939

TEXT OF FINAL ACT  
AND  
STATEMENT BY SUMNER WELLES  
UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE



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## CONSULTATIVE MEETING OF FOREIGN MINISTERS OF THE AMERICAN REPUBLICS

Panama, Republic of Panama  
September 23 to October 3, 1939

### STATEMENT BY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE WELLES<sup>1</sup>

The meeting in Panama of the Foreign Ministers of the American Republics was notable above all else because it demonstrated in a moment of grave world emergency the genuine and strong understanding and solidarity which exist between the American republics. It revealed how closely we have come together in policy and in purpose.

The meeting was noteworthy, secondly, because it gave practical proof of the efficiency of the machinery set up by the inter-American agreements of Buenos Aires and of Lima which provided for rapid consultation between all of the American governments in the event that there existed any emergency which involved a potential menace to the peace of the Western Hemisphere.

Thirdly, the meeting was of outstanding importance because of the nature of the agreements there reached.

In my opinion the most significant of these agreements are the following:

First, the Resolution on Economic Cooperation which establishes an Inter-American Financial and Economic Advisory Committee, composed of experts designated by each American republic, which will be installed in Washington not later than November 15 next. This committee will undertake to determine and to recommend to the several American governments the measures which may, in view of the situation created by the war in Europe, best protect inter-American commercial and financial relations against the immediate difficulties arising out of the war and increase and strengthen them permanently on lines of mutual benefit. These are tasks to be carried out week by week, month by month, through agreements and arrangements that will develop from new conditions and from continuing consideration.

Second, the Joint Declaration of Continental Solidarity.

<sup>1</sup> Delivered in New York City upon his return from Panama as United States delegate to the Meeting, October 11, 1939. Reprinted from *The Department of State Bulletin*, Vol. I, No. 16, October 14, 1939.



Third, the General Declaration of Neutrality of the American Republics in which the latter, in their individual and sovereign capacities, reaffirm their general neutrality and set forth standards of conduct to be followed in their status as neutral Powers. The importance of this declaration of neutrality can hardly be over-emphasized. It represents the agreement of twenty-one sovereign countries upon a series of neutrality measures which they may severally enforce, in accordance with the established principles of international law, through their respective internal legislation. This declaration will prove to be of the utmost practical value in preserving the peace and neutrality of the American nations. It represents, in my judgment, a wise, fair basis for the policy of each of us. The standards so set forth can of course always be supplemented or amended as new developments may arise and as a consequence of the recommendations of the Committee of Experts constituted by the same declaration and which committee will continue in session throughout the duration of the present war.

Fourth and finally, the Declaration of Panama.

The Declaration of Panama is based upon two simple principles. First, the assertion of the twenty-one American nations that, so long as they maintain their neutrality, a war in Europe in which they are not involved should not jeopardize their right to self-protection nor interfere with or destroy normal relations between the American republics; and, second, that consequently the belligerent activities undertaken by the European Powers participating in such war should not take place within those waters adjacent to the American continent which embrace normal inter-American maritime communications. General respect for these principles will mean that the lives and the vital interests of the nationals of the American republics will be to a great extent insured, and the preservation of peace in the Western Hemisphere will be materially safeguarded.

As stipulated in the second article of the Declaration of Panama, the governments of the American republics will endeavor, through joint representations, to secure the acquiescence of the belligerents in these principles. It is obvious that many highly complicated and technical questions will present themselves which will have to be fully considered and determined in the course of the discussions with the belligerents. It is equally clear that these discussions may continue over a considerable period of time.





Beyond this agreement for joint representations the Declaration provides solely that the American governments will, whenever they consider it necessary, consult together to determine upon measures which they may individually or collectively undertake in order to secure the observance of the provisions of the Declaration.

It will be noted that the provisions contained in the fourth article of the Declaration, which provides that the American republics, in the circumstances set forth, may patrol "either individually or collectively, as may be agreed upon by common consent" the waters adjacent to their coasts within the area defined in the Declaration, provide for nothing more than the kind of patrol which the Government of the United States and several other American governments have already undertaken. The purpose of the patrol proposed is to enable the governments of the American nations to obtain the fullest information possible to enable the governments of the American nations to obtain the fullest information possible with regard to what is going on within the restricted area. It must be apparent that in times such as these it is of the utmost importance in the interest of the preservation of the neutrality of this hemisphere that each American nation have the fullest possible advice as to the activities undertaken within the waters near its coasts.

The agreements I have cited above constitute in my opinion the more important of those reached, although I believe that every one of the agreements arrived at in Panama is of the highest significance and of the greatest value in promoting the best interests of the republics of the New World. Every agreement arrived at in Panama represents the considered will of every American government, and every American government rendered its individual contribution to the agreements there adopted.