

No. 55.

New Zealand, No. 300.

MY LORD,—

Downing Street, 8th August, 1913.

I have the honour to request Your Excellency to inform your Ministers that His Majesty's Government have issued to the Governments of Austro-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Germany, France, and the United States an invitation to take part in an International Conference on Safety of Life at Sea which it is proposed to hold in London in the autumn of this year, commencing 12th November.

2. I enclose copies of the programme of the Conference. It will be found to include all the general questions of importance connected with passenger vessels which are raised by the case of the steamship "Titanic," while at the same time regard has been had to the keeping of the discussion within manageable limits.

3. In conveying the invitation to the foreign Governments concerned, it has been explained that in the view of His Majesty's Government it should be the object of the Conference to endeavour to bring about agreement among the participating States with regard to the conditions necessary for the safety in the case of passenger steamships and with reference to other measures in the interests of the safety of maritime passenger traffic. In the event of such an agreement being arrived at and embodied in a Convention, each signatory State would be responsible for giving legislative and administrative effect to the provisions of that Convention and issuing the necessary certificates to its national ships which comply with those provisions. The Conference would further deal with the conditions under which certificates so issued should be accepted as valid by the other signatory States. It has been explained also that it is desired that the Conference should result in a Convention in which international principles will be laid down for securing the safety of passenger traffic at sea, and that it is therefore hoped that the delegates will be given full powers to sign such a Convention.

4. The Governments invited have been informed that His Majesty's Government hope to be in a position shortly to communicate to those countries which accept the invitation certain material bearing on the subjects to be dealt with at the Conference, such as reports of expert advisory committees and copies of existing British rules and regulations, and that if any of the accepting Governments desire to furnish similar material to the other Governments concerned His Majesty's Government will be glad to receive such material, and circulate it on their behalf.

5. I shall be glad to know whether your Ministers would desire to be represented at this Conference.

6. If, however, your Government should for any reason find it inconvenient to send representatives, His Majesty's Government will be glad to inform your Government as to the views at present held by the British delegates on the various subjects to be discussed at the Conference, and they will be prepared to give careful consideration to any representations which your Government may wish to make on these subjects.

I have, &c.,

L. HARCOURT.

Governor His Excellency the Right Hon. the Earl of Liverpool,
K.C.M.G., M.V.O., &c.

Enclosure.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SAFETY OF LIFE AT SEA.—PROGRAMME.

I.—*International Uniformity.*

The principles which should govern the reciprocal acceptance by each of the Governments represented of certificates and standards issued or laid down by the other Governments relating to safety of life at sea.

II.—*Safety of Construction.*

The principles which should be laid down as regards bulkheads and subdivision into watertight compartments, and the question as to what principles can be laid down so as to secure that vessels shall, as regards hull, machinery, and equipments, be fit for the service intended.