Article 2 (Suppression of Slavery and the Slave Trade)

The High Contracting Parties undertake, each in respect of the territories placed under its sovereignty, jurisdiction, protection, suzerainty or tutelage, so far as they have not already taken the necessary steps:

(a) To prevent and suppress the slave trade;

(b) To bring about, progressively and as soon as possible, the complete abolition of slavery in all its forms.
i. 1925 British Draft Protocol

ARTICLE 2

The signatory States shall:
(a) Suppress all forms of the slave trade;
(b) Provide for the eventual emancipation of all slaves in their respective territories, and also for as speedy an elimination of domestic and other slavery as social conditions will allow.¹

Article 2 was meant to create State obligations with regard to ‘slavery’ and the ‘slave trade’ as defined in Article 1. When Viscount Cecil of Chelwood introduced the 1925 Draft Protocol proposed by the British Government he was rather terse in regard to the provisions of sub-paragraph (a), simply noting that it “definitely obligated all the signatories to suppress all forms of the slave trade”. Where the provisions were more nuanced was with regard to ‘slavery’ and the obligations being attached to it, with Viscount Cecil noting that sub-paragraph (b) “was very cautiously worded”. Reiterating that sub-paragraph, Viscount Cecil noted that the British Government “recognized that, with regard to domestic slavery, a very difficult question arose, and therefore all that they could ask States to agree to was the desirability of getting rid of domestic slavery, and to do so as and when the opportunity offered”.²