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South African Embassy (Rhodesia)

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The Ambassador of the Republic of South Africa presents his compliments to Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and has the honour to convey the following message from the South African Government:

"The South African Government is profoundly disturbed at the latest turn of events at the Lancaster House Constitutional Conference on Zimbabwe/Rhodesia. The conference, originally scheduled to last two weeks, has now dragged on for five, and the delay is due to the publicly proclaimed intransigence of one of the parties, the Patriotic Front. The momentum gained by the tabling of the constitutional proposals of the United Kingdom and their subsequent acceptance by Bishop Muzorewa has been dissipated by failure to deal decisively with the refusal of the Patriotic Front to give an unqualified acceptance of the proposed constitution. Despite the clear prior statement by the United Kingdom Government that the constitution as tabled was not negotiable and was presented on a take-it or leave-it basis, the Patriotic Front have repeatedly been afforded additional time to reconsider their rejection of the constitution as it stands. This has had no

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effect on their position, as was confirmed yesterday, but the reaction of the United Kingdom Government has been to announce another postponement, despite the statement at the Conservative Party Conference on the previous day by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Commonwealth Affairs that:-

'I say to those who ... appear to think that we should talk on and on and on about everything, without getting agreement to anything, that a time had to come when a decision would be taken on the principal issues at stake.'

The South African Government believes the following facts to be relevant and important at this juncture:

Firstly, agreement to the United Kingdom draft constitution was a courageous act by the delegation of Bishop Muzorewa. There is no doubt that it was a controversial decision not lightly taken, which could have caused the disintegration of his delegation. Deep-seated differences of opinion could easily have frustrated acceptance.

Secondly, that Bishop Muzorewa's acceptance was predicated upon the assumption that the same rules would apply to the Patriotic Front delegation and that, having accepted the Constitution, he was entitled to believe that his Government had done all, if not more, that could be expected of it. Therefore there was no justification for the continued imposition of sanctions.

Thirdly, that the malaise surrounding developments concerning the attitude of the Patriotic Front is leading to a climate of cynicism, uncertainty, frustration and distrust in Zimbabwe/Rhodesia itself.

Decisiveness, particularly as regards the lifting of sanctions is of vital importance at this crucial period, when many white Rhodesians, whose experience and technological proficiency is so urgently required in Zimbabwe/Rhodesia, are making up their minds either to stay or leave.

Fourthly, that every moment of delay encourages the armed conflict in Zimbabwe/Rhodesia, jeopardising the eventual recovery and reconstruction of the country. The toll of human life is appalling.

Fifthly, that the absence of the Prime Minister from his country for five weeks contributes to the confusion and the feeling of insecurity in the country, and is having a negative effect on orderly administration. Bishop Muzorewa stands in a special relationship to his people and they require his leadership.

Finally, that the present uncertainty is playing into the hands of the enemies of peace, stability and orderly progress in the region and is being exploited by them. The consequences for the whole southern African region could be catastrophic, with violence spreading like cancer from one country to the next, and with incalculable danger to the survival of democracy in the region and harm to the strategic interests of the West and the democratic leaders of Africa.

The South African Government therefore urgently requests the Government of the United Kingdom to take the steps necessary to remove the uncertainty from the present situation. In particular the South African Government urges the Government of the United Kingdom to remove sanctions without delay as

the minimum step required to restore essential confidence in the future of Zimbabwe/Rhodesia and avoid further deterioration in the situation.

The Ambassador of the Republic of South Africa avails himself of this opportunity to renew to Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs the assurance of his highest consideration.

LONDON WC2N 5DP  
12 October 1979

