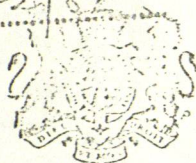


PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T42/82



~~TOP SECRET~~
Subject filed on Gabon:
UK/Gabon Relations
Jan 1982

10 DOWNING STREET

JL
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THE PRIME MINISTER

9 March 1982

Dear Mr. President,

I was very pleased to receive your letter of 10 February, which Lord Carrington passed on to me following his meeting on 19 February with M. Martin Bongo. I am sorry that I was not able to receive your delegation myself on this occasion. I vividly recall our very useful and enjoyable meeting during your last visit to London in May 1980.

We have given careful study to your letter, in which are set out the substantial costs involved in the holding of a conference on the scale of UNCTAD VI. We well understand your wish to carry out in full measure the obligations assumed by host capitals, despite the financial constraints your government faces. However, as Lord Carrington remarked to M. Bongo, we ourselves are facing pressures for economy which have led us to scrutinize with care all manner of governmental expenditure, including the level of our contributions to international agencies. Against this background, we would find it difficult to meet your request for assistance.

Even if the resources were forthcoming, time does seem to be very short for the expansion you plan of your existing facilities. I am sure that in welcoming your country's offer to host the conference, it was not the intention of the UNCTAD membership to impose a heavy financial burden on Gabon. We hope that discussions in Geneva might prove constructive, perhaps by reaching agreement to adjust the scale of UNCTAD VI so that there is no undue burden on facilities in Libreville. No doubt

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the March meeting of the Trade and Development Board will provide an opportunity for further consideration of the question.

I am sorry that I am unable to give a more helpful reply on the UNCTAD matter. But I should like to take this opportunity to express my personal pleasure at the development and strengthening of our bilateral relations which has taken place during last year. His Royal Highness The Duke of Kent, Sir Geoffrey Howe and Mr. Richard Luce have all told me of the friendly and generous hospitality which they found during their visits to Libreville. I have also learned with pleasure of the recent signing of a project line of credit which will facilitate British participation in your immense enterprise of constructing the Trans-Gabonese Railway, and so give visible proof of the flourishing of British-Gabonese co-operation.

I understand that Richard Luce has conveyed an invitation to your Minister for Foreign Affairs and Co-operation to pay a more substantial visit to the United Kingdom later this year. I hope that it will be possible for this to be arranged very soon.

May I take this opportunity, Your Excellency, to renew to you the assurance of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Raymond D. Hunt