



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

17 August 1979

Dear Bryan,

and

Prime Minister

BGM
17/8

Rhodesia Reactions to the Invitations to the Constitutional
Conference

I enclose a summary of the reactions so far to the Government's announcement about the Constitutional Conference on Rhodesia.

The response has been satisfactory. Bishop Muzorewa has accepted the invitation. The composition of his delegation has not yet been decided, but it will be based on the Salisbury administration. We have confirmed that the representation from Salisbury is for Muzorewa to decide (he has sought reassurance on this point). This - as expected - has brought protests from the minor parties (Chikerema and Chirau), but there is no question of issuing separate invitations to them.

The Patriotic Front are reported to have rejected a ceasefire in advance of the negotiations. But it is clear that they would find themselves in an extremely difficult position if they refused to attend the Conference. Mr Nkomo and Mr Mugabe are due to meet this weekend to decide their reply.

President Nyerere may press us to be more specific about our proposals before the conference and we all resist this. But the Tanzanian Foreign Minister has described the outline constitution as a reasonable one, commenting that it should cause no problems if taken strictly on its merits.

I am copying this letter and enclosure to Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever,
Stephen

(J S Wall)
Private Secretary

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RHODESIA: FIRST REACTIONS TO THE INVITATION TO THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE AND THE OUTLINE PROPOSALS FOR CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

1. On 14 August the formal invitations to attend the Constitutional Conference in London on 10 September together with an outline of the proposed Constitution were delivered to Bishop Muzorewa, Mr Nkomo and ZANU Vice-President Muzenda. On the same day texts of these documents were transmitted to governments in Commonwealth countries, the United States, the EEC and other interested states.

THE SALISBURY ADMINISTRATION

2. The invitation was considered by Bishop Muzorewa's government at a special Cabinet meeting on 15 August. A statement issued afterwards said that it had been decided to accept. The statement stressed the fact that the government held office as a result of the April elections and that consequently the delegation would consist of representatives of the government of national unity. The invitation was accepted on the basis that there would be no preconditions. The Bishop's party (the UANC) have issued a statement welcoming our proposals and accepting the possibility of some constitutional change.

3. The invitation and the proposals had been handed over in advance to Bishop Muzorewa. He was relieved to learn that there would be no participation from other Commonwealth Governments and that the composition of the Salisbury delegation would be for him to decide. He reiterated his worries about new elections. In further comments to Mr Day on 16 August, Muzorewa expressed concern about the possibility of invitations being issued to further parties to attend the Conference. He also said that his Cabinet would have hoped for prior consultation on the British Government's outline proposals for an independence constitution.

4. The Secretary to the Cabinet, Mr George Smith, sought to argue that our proposals, except for the public service commissions, involved no change from the existing Constitution. An FCO Legal Adviser is now in Salisbury for discussions with Mr Smith.

5. Chief Chirau, who was defeated at the April elections, has complained about his exclusion from the Conference. Mr Chikerema, leader of the break-away Zimbabwe Democratic Party, has also protested. We shall be sticking to the line that the Salisbury delegation is for Muzorewa to decide.

PATRIOTIC FRONT

6. The invitation and outline of the Constitution was handed to Nkomo at Heathrow. He asked few questions, but objected to the provision for the police and armed forces commissions. He also questioned the basis on which Bishop Muzorewa was being invited. He rang the FCO the next day to say that he had no further points to raise but would be replying within ten days when he had discussed the proposals with his colleagues.

7. In Maputo, Mr Mugabe telephoned from Rwanda as the invitation was being handed over to ZANU Vice-President Muzenda. Muzenda said that he could not comment and only asked who else was being invited other than Bishop Muzorewa.

FRONT LINE STATES

8. The Mozambican Foreign Minister said that the Mozambicans would have to await Patriotic Front reactions before commenting. The Government-controlled newspaper has commented favourably, but said that ZANU could not accept proposals based on the existing Constitution.

9. In Dar es Salaam the documents were handed to a senior official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to President Nyerere's personal adviser, Miss Wicken. Miss Wicken's reaction indicated that President Nyerere may try to press us to put forward more detailed proposals (which he would try to pre-negotiate) before the conference opens but the Tanzanian Foreign Minister has welcomed our proposals.

10. Sir Seretse Khama expressed pleasure at the speed with which we were acting and hoped that both sides would accept the invitation. He said that the Patriotic Front would isolate themselves if they refused to attend. He has reservations about special representation for the white minority, but is prepared to accept this. The Botswana Foreign Minister has announced that Botswana do not accept that the Patriotic Front can be regarded as the sole representatives of the people of Zimbabwe.

SOUTH AFRICA

11. The South African Foreign Minister reacted more calmly than after the Lusaka agreement. He found some parts of the proposals encouraging, and said that it was right to discourage the parties from taking up firm positions before the conference began. He said that the South African Government would be guided in their views by those of the Salisbury Government.

UNITED STATES

12. The State Department have offered to give their assistance in the run-up to the Conference, and have instructed their posts overseas to give general support to the UK's current moves.

EEC

13. Reactions from EEC capitals have been very favourable. The Dutch have said that the Netherlands will give the proposed constitutional conference their fullest support. The Danish Foreign Minister has replied to the Secretary of State with a message of congratulation.

OTHER COUNTRIES

14. Although the communiqué signed by Mr Manley on his visit to Mozambique was unhelpful, the reaction from other Commonwealth countries has been generally encouraging. Mr Fraser has issued a public statement strongly supporting the Government's announcement. The Canadians have said that they will do whatever is necessary to support our initiative.

15. Of countries outside the Commonwealth and the EEC, Portugal has made a helpful offer of support.

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

16. In a personal message to Lord Carrington, Dr Waldheim has promised to support in the search for a settlement "consonant with the principles laid down by the United Nations".

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