

10 June, 1986

MISSION TO SOUTH AFRICA
REPORT OF THE COMMONWEALTH GROUP OF EMINENT PERSONS

Dear Annie Whinister,

I send you the Report of the Commonwealth Group of Eminent Persons established under the Nassau Accord on Southern Africa. It is a matter of much satisfaction to me, as I am sure it will be to you, that it is a unanimous Report and one which speaks with a unique measure of authority and authenticity.

In my Foreword to the Report I have drawn attention to the great service it renders to the Commonwealth and, indeed, to the wider world community. I have also drawn attention to the challenge it poses for effective international action now. For the Commonwealth, the processes for considering such action were established at Nassau. It was agreed that a meeting of seven Commonwealth leaders (the President of Zambia, and the Prime Ministers of Australia, Bahamas, Britain, Canada, India and Zimbabwe) would be held to review the situation. In the light of that review Commonwealth leaders would consider what further measures should be taken against South Africa if, in the six-month period of the Group's work, there has not been adequate progress. After consultation among the seven Heads of Government, the dates agreed for that Review Meeting are 3-5 August, 1986. The Meeting will be held at the Commonwealth Secretariat in London under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister of the Bahamas. I will announce the arrangements for the Review Meeting on 12 June.


We had agreed when the Group was established with effect from 1 January, 1986 that the six-month period envisaged in the Nassau Accord should be regarded as running from that day. The Report of the Group leaves little doubt that by the end of June 1986 there will not have been adequate progress towards meeting the objectives of the Accord, namely, 'dismantling apartheid and erecting the structures of democracy in South Africa'.

If this is, indeed, the view taken by the seven Heads of Government when they meet early in August, the question arises as to what further measures Commonwealth Governments will adopt beyond those already set out in paragraph 6(iii) of the Accord.

That matter will obviously be much on the minds of the seven leaders who meet in London; but I am sure it will be of great value to them to have the benefit of the views of the other Commonwealth leaders at that time. Given the pace at which events are moving in South Africa, I am sure you will not wish an overall Commonwealth response to be deferred. August, itself, is already late; but if the leaders who are meeting to review the situation could have the benefit of the views of Commonwealth leaders generally, their deliberations would be strengthened considerably. I would be happy, therefore, to convey any views you may wish them to have collectively; in addition, of course, to those you might convey to them directly.

I cannot end this initial message forwarding the Report without telling you how deeply indebted I feel to the seven 'Eminent Persons'. None of them would have wished that title on themselves, but they were in truth 'eminent' both in their qualifications and in the service they rendered. They devoted themselves to the task assigned to them by Commonwealth Governments with absolute dedication and brought to it a rare quality of wisdom, understanding, discretion and courage. They were always a Group. The fact that their Report is unanimous speaks for itself; as does the strength of conviction with which it speaks. The Commonwealth, and all the people of South Africa, could not have been better served. I am sure you would wish me to convey to each and every member of the Group the collective gratitude of all Commonwealth Governments for the excellence of their service. I have asked them to be available in London in the event of the Review Meeting wishing to hear from them directly.

With deep respect,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Ramphal', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Shridath S. Ramphal

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP,
Prime Minister of Great Britain and
Northern Ireland.