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From the Private Secretary

SOUTH AFRICA: DISCUSSION OF POSSIBLE STATEMENT
OF WESTERN PRINCIPLES

Thank you for your letter of 24 March about developments in the trilateral process of confidential consultations on South Africa.

The Prime Minister is clear that this exercise has gone badly awry. The original purpose of the discussions was to try to agree on principles which could be used discreetly with the parties in Southern Africa to help make progress towards a settlement at the right moment. It was never envisaged that there would be a text for public use. The Prime Minister takes the view that the last thing we need is more declaratory diplomacy. Once we are publicly committed to a text it will tie our hands for the future. And the text itself is likely to deteriorate once the French, Canadians, Italians and Japanese get their hands on it. The Prime Minister hopes the Foreign Secretary will use his talk with Mr. Shultz on 9 April to remonstrate that the purpose of the whole exercise will be lost if it ends up as just one more public statement.

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