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AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION

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THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

28 February 1990

My dear Prime Minister,

Mr Hawke has asked me to pass to you the following text of a letter on South Africa.

Quote

Dear Margaret

I agree with you that there have been some encouraging moves in South Africa in recent weeks and that these deserve the support of the international community.

In the hours leading up to the release on 11 February of Nelson Mandela, I congratulated the South African Government for the wisdom it was showing by making the first steps towards remedying past and continuing injustices. I also urged State President De Klerk to continue the process with the release of other political prisoners and the lifting of the state of emergency.

Following as it did on the heels of the reforms announced by President De Klerk in his parliamentary address of 2 February, Mandela's release at last provides the opportunity for constructive negotiations to begin between the South African Government and representatives of the black population.

As you are fully aware, the purpose of the sanctions policy adopted by the Commonwealth has not been to achieve the welcome but limited movement made so far. Rather our common purpose has been to see an end to the iniquitous apartheid system itself.

Negotiations to achieve that goal have yet to start and it is my personal belief, and the view of the Australian Government, that until we see evidence of clear and irreversible moves towards genuine negotiations and the ending of apartheid, it is premature to move to dismantle our economic and other pressures on the South African Government. We believe that our position on this issue is consistent with the great majority of Western Governments. In taking this stand we are also fully in line with the wishes of Nelson Mandela and other black representatives. In his first statement after his release, Mandela called on the international community to continue to isolate the South African Government. "To lift sanctions now", he said, "would be to run the risk of aborting the process towards the complete eradication of apartheid."

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For the time being, we consider that the appropriate time to examine progress towards democracy in South Africa and any consequent actions on sanctions will be at the next scheduled meeting of Commonwealth Foreign Ministers in May this year.

Yours sincerely

Bob Hawke

Unquote

I will forward the original letter (dated 28 February 1990) to you as soon as it is received from Canberra.

Warmest personal regards.

Yours sincerely,

Doug McClelland

(Douglas McClelland)

The Rt Hon. Margaret Thatcher, M.P.
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
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From the Private Secretary

28 February 1990

I enclose a copy of Mr. Hawke's reply to the Prime Minister's recent letter about South Africa. One can imagine several points which could be made in a reply. But I am inclined to think that it is not worthwhile at this stage, and that we should wait until President de Klerk takes the further step of lifting the state of emergency (or possibly until there is a different Prime Minister in Australia).

(C. D. POWELL)

R. N. Peirce, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.