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P R E S S S T A T E M E N T

ACCEPTANCE OF BRITISH CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS

The following statement was issued September 21 by the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, Bishop Abel T. Muzorewa: -

During the period since our arrival my delegation and I have taken the opportunity to reflect very deeply on the constitutional proposals placed before us by the British government. We have also engaged in very thorough discussions with the representatives of that government and have received their views on the various questions we put to them. The constitutional conference has been approached by our delegation with completely open and pragmatic minds. We have been guided and influenced purely by what is in the best interests of the seven million people of our nation - black, white, coloured and Asian. This has always been, and is, our total and unswerving commitment.

After the most careful scrutiny we have noted that the constitutional proposals put to us by Her Majesty's government represent a sincere attempt on its part to reach agreement on an independence constitution which not only conforms to our own democratic principles, but also provides for the rights and aspirations of the majority of our people. At the same time, they contain certain reasonable safeguards for all our minorities. Throughout the course of our negotiations with the British government the over-riding motivating factors on our part have been what we came here to achieve, namely the restoration of peace to our land and our people, the removal of sanctions imposed on the previous white minority rule government and recognition of our popularly and democratically elected majority rule government.

We have, therefore, as a means of ensuring further progress in the task ahead of us, accepted the general principles of the constitutional proposals submitted by the British government. This acceptance is subject to the satisfactory working out of the many details concerned with these proposals and the subsequent steps that will then have to be taken.

We believe that in the name of justice, honesty and fair play our co-operative and pragmatic approach will now enable us and the British government to proceed with consideration of these details.

Finally, to the extent that our acceptance of the basic principles enshrined in the constitutional proposals put before us by Her Majesty's government represents a major contribution towards finding a reasonable, just and internationally acceptable solution to our current problems, we now demand, and it is our right to do so, that the sanctions against us be lifted immediately since they no longer hold any validity. The fact in point is that, since a minority government in Zimbabwe Rhodesia has already been replaced by the installation of black and popular majority rule, and since we have now agreed in principle to the amendment of certain clauses in our constitution in accordance with the wishes of the British government, there are no longer moral or legal grounds for the continuation of sanctions against our country by Her Majesty's government and the international community as a whole.

September 24, 1979