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PRESS RELEASE

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ARCHBISHOP TREVOR HUDDLESTON REACTS TO WHITES-ONLY REFERENDUM IN SOUTH AFRICA

The following statement was issued this afternoon by Archbishop Trevor Huddleston, the President of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in response to the announcement by President de Klerk that he is to call a whites-only referendum in South Africa:

"I am most concerned by President de Klerk's decision to call a whites-only referendum. It is a dangerous and high-risk strategy which puts the entire negotiating process in South Africa at risk.

"The Prime Minister must make clear that neither Britain, nor the rest of the international community, will tolerate a situation in which the white electorate can veto democratic change. I very much regret that John Major failed to use the opportunity of his meeting with Mr de Klerk three weeks ago to make this abundantly clear."

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Background

The Anti-Apartheid Movement has been campaigning to secure British opposition to a whites-only referendum since President de Klerk first raised the prospect of such a referendum in his address to Parliament on 24th January 1992.

The AAM in an Open Letter to John Major delivered on 31st January 1992 - the eve of his meeting with President de Klerk - wrote that "The British government has a duty to make clear to Mr de Klerk that it would never accept such a white veto and nor would the rest of the international community". In his reply to Archbishop Huddleston (17th Feb 1992) John Major failed to respond in substance to this point.

The AAM Chair Robert Hughes MP also raised the matter in the House of Commons. On 10th February (Hansard Col 347) the Prime Minister responded to a request for a statement on "the proposal to give the white electorate a veto through a referendum on any agreement reached at the Convention for a Democratic South Africa" by stating "The South African government have proposed a referendum to obtain the views of all South Africans. The procedure for this is a matter for discussion in CODESA".