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POLICY BRIEFING PAPER

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## BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS SOUTH AFRICA

Britain is working in South Africa to:

- help bring about the end of apartheid and the peaceful transition to a democratic, non-racial, prosperous South Africa;
- to encourage the economic development of South Africa and hence the region as a whole;
- to protect and develop UK interests.

As a result of her long-standing historical links in South Africa, Britain has extensive interests there:

- wide-ranging human and family ties: some 350,000 British nationals with right of abode in the UK live in South Africa, while possibly some 750,000 others may also have the right of abode in the UK;
- extensive trade: in 1989, UK exports to South Africa amounted to £1,037 million (1.1 per cent of total UK exports) and a further £418 million to the region;
- substantial investments: invisible earnings from South Africa alone are put at about £1,000 million a year.

In addition, South Africa is the major exporter (and in some cases the sole exporter, apart from the USSR) of such strategic minerals as platinum, manganese, vanadium and chrome.

## BRITAIN'S OBJECTIVES

The British Government wants to see all the nations of Southern Africa cooperate to the benefit of their rapidly expanding populations. This needs the active participation of South Africa, the predominant economic power. It will not happen while the system of apartheid remains in place. South Africa's own development and relationship with her neighbours will inevitably be constrained until apartheid is removed. A political settlement in South Africa will therefore benefit South Africa herself, the region and all with significant interests there.

The British Government has long regarded apartheid as abhorrent. There are now grounds for optimism that there may soon be an end to the system.

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The South African Government has stated unequivocally that the new constitution which it aims to negotiate will be free of racial discrimination. But the formal ending of apartheid will not redress the socio-economic imbalances within South African society which these policies intensified. An important objective of British Government policy is to help ensure that the measures taken to bring about a more equitable distribution of resources do not damage the economic base on which a post-apartheid South Africa will depend.

The main pressures for change in South Africa are internal - a rapidly expanding population, the waste of resources through apartheid, recognition that a system based on minority rule will always be unstable and that apartheid is immoral. Externally, until apartheid goes, South Africa will not gain the confidence of the international financial markets which it needs to attract capital. The role of outside governments must therefore be to encourage the internal momentum for change and to ensure that external influences do not inhibit it.

#### BRITAIN'S POLICY

The main elements of British policy are:

- a mixture of pressure, persuasion and encouragement of all the parties in South Africa to enter negotiations leading to the peaceful end of apartheid and the creation of a non-racial democratic South Africa. To this end the British Government has long sought
  - the unconditional release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners and detainees;
  - the lifting of the bans on the ANC, PAC and other political organisations;
  - the lifting of the State of Emergency;
  - the lifting of other restrictions on normal political activity (eg restriction on the Press and on the right to peaceful demonstration);
  - the repeal of racially-based legislation;
  - the opening of dialogue with representative black leaders in the context of an end to violence;
- a targetted programme of aid to the black communities to help prepare them for their role in a post-apartheid society, and to alleviate social and economic hardships caused by apartheid;
- civil and military aid to other States of the region and to the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC)\*, to help reduce their vulnerability and to promote their economic and political development.

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\*Member States: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The last few years have seen a fundamental change in South African Government policy, firstly towards its neighbours and subsequently domestically. Responding to a US initiative, the South African Government agreed to take part in talks which resulted in the New York agreements of December 1988 on the withdrawal of Cuban and South African troops from Angola, and hence to the implementation of the UN Plan for the independence of Namibia. Namibia's independence, on 12 March 1990, resolved a long-standing problem within the region. (This was a goal to which successive British governments had devoted much effort.) There are now also improved prospects of ending the conflicts in Angola and Mozambique.

Internally, since his election in September 1989, President de Klerk, who led the National Party election campaign on a programme of change, has applied a policy of negotiation rather than confrontation within South Africa. His speech at the opening of the South African Parliament, on 2 February 1990, transformed the political situation in the country and opened the way for dialogue. The steps he has taken include the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners, the unbanning of and the lifting of all restrictions on the African National Congress (ANC), Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), South African Communist Party (SACP) and other organisations, the lifting of the State of Emergency (except in Natal) and the easing of political activity generally. He has begun a dialogue with the ANC, and has stated that he is committed to the removal of all apartheid legislation and to the negotiation of a new constitution acceptable to all South Africans.

The ANC has not yet formally suspended the "armed struggle", though it made a commitment to negotiations in the document adopted as the Organisation of African Unity's (OAU's) "Harare Declaration" in August 1989. In response to the steps taken by President de Klerk in February, the ANC entered talks with the South African Government on what it saw as the remaining "obstacles to negotiations". These took place in Cape Town, from 2-4 May, in a constructive atmosphere. The Government and the ANC have committed themselves to stability and to a peaceful process of negotiation. Progress is being made towards formal constitutional negotiations on the future of South Africa. But formidable obstacles remain and the level of violence, particularly in Natal, is still cause for serious concern.

## PROMOTING NEGOTIATIONS

The British Government welcomed the Cape Town talks as the beginning of a process for which it had long worked. Until now, the main focus of UK policy has been on the South African Government. It is the Government and its supporters who had to be persuaded to make the concessions necessary to clear the road to negotiations. Accordingly the British Government has applied a consistent policy of pressure and encouragement to urge the South African Government to take the first steps in this process. It has used its influence with the South African Government in contacts through diplomatic channels, and in the visits of the South African Foreign and Finance Ministers to London in March and May 1989 and the Prime Minister's meeting with Mr de Klerk, as the newly-elected leader of the National Party, in June 1989. The Government has throughout remained committed to implementing the arms embargo. It has also retained other restrictive

measures as a signal of opposition to apartheid and to reinforce the demands for specific reforms in South Africa.

Britain has consistently opposed the diplomatic and economic isolation of South Africa. This would have sacrificed all prospect of influence, prolonged apartheid and hurt those who most need help. This is not a policy imposed by any of South Africa's main trading partners, nor has it received significant support in the European Community (EC).

When, in February 1990, President de Klerk took, or committed his government to take, all the steps identified as necessary to clear the way to negotiations, the British Government considered it logical to relax some of the measures imposed in association with other EC countries in 1986. These had been imposed with the explicit purpose of backing demands for the steps President de Klerk had now taken or committed himself to taking. The British Government also wanted to send a positive signal of support for what had been done and to encourage further moves. Other EC countries shared the Government's analysis of the situation, but were unable to agree on action in respect of the 1986 restrictions. Accordingly, on 23 February 1990, the British Government lifted those bans which had been purely voluntary in application: on investment and the promotion of tourism. The EC did agree that cultural and scientific cooperation could be resumed. Several other member States have since lifted certain restrictions, and at Dublin in June 1990, the European Council accepted the principle of a gradual relaxation of pressure in response to change.

It is important to ensure that the opportunity for negotiations on a new constitution is not wasted. At the same time as urging the South African Government to take the steps indicated above, the British Government has sought to persuade the ANC and other parties to suspend violence and enter negotiations. The Government welcomes the commitment of the ANC and the (Zulu) Inkatha movement to negotiations and seeks to persuade other political organisations to make similar commitments. Negotiations can only succeed in conditions of peace. It will be vital for both Mr Mandela and President de Klerk to restrain the more extreme elements among their constituencies and to maintain the momentum of cooperation and progress. The goodwill that the two leaders have established between them will help. Meanwhile, there is much work to be done to remove the structures of apartheid. The South African Government, the ANC and all participating parties will need to be flexible and imaginative in envisaging future constitutional arrangements for South Africa. The British Prime Minister made these points to President de Klerk and to Mr Mandela when she saw them separately in London in May and July respectively.

#### THE ECONOMIC DIMENSION

Economic factors will be important to the negotiating process. Only if whites see a secure future and blacks feel that they will be better off will negotiations work. Without an acceleration of economic growth, there will be a greater risk of polarisation in South African politics and it will be more difficult for the negotiators to persuade their own supporters to accept any eventual compromise.

The primary responsibility for rectifying socio-economic imbalances must rest with the South African Government, and it is welcome that the Government is beginning to increase the resources devoted to those who have

previously been disadvantaged by apartheid. But no South African Government, present or future, will have the resources to tackle them alone. South Africa will need to attract new inflows of capital not only from international financial institutions but above all from the private sector. Artificial constraints, such as sanctions, will have to be removed. But private sector funds will only flow when banks and investors are convinced that the long-term prospects of South Africa justify the risks. This imposes a responsibility on the negotiators to ensure that the new constitution enables the new South Africa to solve its economic as well as its political problems.

#### AID TO THE BLACK COMMUNITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

The British Government has taken the lead in channelling assistance directly to black South Africans and community groups. The purpose of this aid is twofold: to signal Britain's support for those disadvantaged by apartheid, and to help them prepare to play their rightful role in a non-racial South Africa. It concentrates on community projects (nearly 300) and education (about 1,000 students this year). Black community leaders have themselves identified this "nation-building" as a high priority. As well as running a carefully targetted programme of bilateral aid currently worth £8 million per annum, Britain contributes a further £4 million per annum to the EC programme of positive measures for the "victims of apartheid". Now that the bans on opposition political organisations have been lifted, Britain has also established a small non-discriminatory fund to help those previously excluded from the political system to prepare for negotiations.

#### AID TO OTHER STATES OF THE REGION

Britain has also given priority in her aid programme to strengthening the national economies of others in the region and has encouraged regional cooperation. Through the SADCC, the British Government has made a major contribution to the improvement and extension of regional transport routes, in particular the northern corridor and routes to Mozambican ports. In addition, British Army teams train Mozambican troops to protect the Limpopo line and help to train and equip the Zimbabwean and Malawian forces who protect the Nacala and Beira lines. Britain is helping to train military and police forces in most other countries of the region, including Namibia. British aid to the member States of SADCC amounts to around £1.3 billion since 1980 (when SADCC was formed).

#### CONCLUSION

The British Government has applied a consistent policy towards an unchanging objective: the ending of apartheid through negotiations. This prospect is now in sight, as the South African Government and the other parties involved move towards constitutional negotiations. The task for outsiders is to encourage this process, but it is not too early to begin consideration of how best the international community can help the transition to a non-racial, democratic South Africa. Achieving that goal will not only bring benefits to the people of South Africa but will open new possibilities for economic development and cooperation throughout the region.