



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

15 AUGUST, 1979

RHODESIAN CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE

The Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, has welcomed the early initiative of the British Government in calling a Constitutional Conference on Rhodesia to begin on 10 September. It is a most encouraging development in the long history of conflict which has brought suffering and distress to a large part of Africa, which with peace could have a promising future. Peace and prosperity can only flow from co-operation among all groups of Rhodesians on the basis of genuine majority rule. Human dignity demands a constitutional settlement based on the framework agreed at the Commonwealth Conference in Lusaka.

Australia has been particularly concerned to see that provisions for constitutional amendment should be consistent with the general objective of providing for effective majority rule and that similar considerations should be incorporated in arrangements for administration of the Defence Forces, Public Service and the Police.

The Prime Minister expressed the strong hope that the leaders of the Patriotic Front and the Salisbury Government would participate in the forthcoming discussions in the same spirit of practical good sense which the Front Line States and Britain had brought to the Lusaka conference, making it one of the most successful in the history of the Commonwealth.

We cannot ignore the difficulties which are bound to arise along the way, but an important requirement now is to ensure that the process of discussion gets under way as early as possible and that the momentum developed at Lusaka is maintained.