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Prime Minister

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Agree that

- (i) we should send an observer to the regional preparatory meeting on 24 to 27 May

4 May 1983

- (ii) we should reserve our position on attendance at the full conference in August?

A.F.C. 5/5

I should prefer that we did not attend this preparatory meeting which seems to me unnecessary. The proper channel for these arrangements is the dip to note one we should however to participate in this need.

Dear John,

International Conference on the Question of Palestine

The UN General Assembly decided in 1981 to hold an International Conference on the question of Palestine, the objectives being subsequently defined as increasing awareness of the facts relating to the issue and winning governmental and non-governmental support for effective measures to enable the Palestinians to exercise their 'inalienable rights'. The Conference itself is to be held in Paris from 16 to 27 August at UNESCO. Regional preparatory meetings have also been organised. The European Preparatory Meeting will be in Geneva on 24 to 27 May. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people, set up by the General Assembly in 1975, is acting as a Preparatory Committee for these meetings and the Conference itself.

on whole authority?

We have long considered this committee to have an unbalanced remit and composition, and have preferred not to associate ourselves with its work and its conclusions. We and the rest of the Ten apart from Greece abstained on the 1981 Resolution which decided to convene the Conference. However the Conference has now gathered a momentum of its own and promises to be a major event. We need to decide whether we should attend the European Preparatory Meeting and the Conference itself and if so in what capacity.

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The Political Directors of the Ten are due to consider this at their meeting today and tomorrow. It would obviously be helpful to have a common line of the Ten if at all possible, but this looks unlikely. On present form, the Greeks will participate, the French will not (so long as the conference is held in Paris - it is quite possible that they will agree to participate in exchange for a change of venue) and the rest have not made up their minds,

only - no right to speak. not

/although



although most would probably favour some kind of compromise. There are basically three options: non-attendance; full participation; and attendance as observers (with the right to speak).

*Not if France do not attend*

The arguments in favour of attendance in one way or another are essentially that it will be a major event and that it will be difficult to explain, for example to the Arabs, why we are not attending a UN-sponsored conference on one of the world's most pressing problems when we have been in favour of similar conferences on Cambodia and Afghanistan and attended the recent Namibia conference as observers. Moreover if we do not attend, there is no possibility of influencing the outcome in any way and we can thereafter have no complaint if it becomes the basis of future General Assembly discussions.

*This is not the conference*

On the other hand, there can be little doubt that the Conference will be a forum for a good deal of anti-Israeli and anti-US rhetoric and that any concluding document will fully reflect this. If we attend, even as observers, we tend to enhance the status of the conference and make it more difficult to dissociate ourselves from its conclusions. We cannot seriously argue that this conference is likely to be helpful to the cause of Middle East peace. Finally, our attendance would be criticized by the Israelis and the Jewish community here.

Sir J Thomson has recommended from New York that on balance we should try to rally a majority of the Ten around participation as observers in both meetings with the right to speak. Having considered this carefully, however, Mr Pym is of the view that while we should agree to attend the European meeting as observers, perhaps being represented at Counsellor level from UKMIS Geneva, we should make clear at the same time that our participation in the same capacity at the full Conference will depend on what emerges from the European meeting and the other regional preparatory meetings. This should be defensible to critics from both sides, and there is a fair chance of achieving a common position of at least 8 of the 10 on this basis.

/Since this



Since this decision may nevertheless attract some attention, it would be helpful to have an indication of the Prime Minister's views. It would be particularly helpful if we could give our Political Director a steer before the end of the meeting on 5 May.

Then they  
should have  
consulted us  
earlier. A.S.C. 5/5.  
(I have said they  
must stall).

Yours ever

(J E Holmes)  
Private Secretary

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4 MAY 1983

