



Prime Minister

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Foreign Secretary believes that

London SW1A 2AH

we and our European partners should

25 July 1983

attend the Conference as

observers. Agree?

A.S.C. 25/7

Y
L
M

Dear John,

International Conference on the Question of Palestine

John Holmes wrote to you on 7 June to inform you that the European Regional Preparatory Meeting for the above conference was to be held in Geneva from 4-8 July. In accordance with the Prime Minister's views recorded in your letter of 6 May we did not participate in this meeting. Four of our EC partners did so: Greece (as a full participant) and France, Italy and Ireland as observers.

Consultations have now begun in the Ten to see whether it is possible to reach a common position on participation in the main Conference, to be held in Geneva from 29 August to 7 September. We will need to inform our partners in due course of our own intentions.

The background to this Conference and the main arguments for and against participation were set out in John Holmes's letter of 4 May. The new factors are as follows:

(i) the concluding documents from the Regional Preparatory Meetings have varied considerably in tone. All have included much standard pro-Palestinian and anti-Israel rhetoric. The African and Middle Eastern Meetings produced extreme documents including calls for sanctions against Israel. The Asian and Latin American Meetings were more restrained. The European Meeting produced the least radical document, including a reference to the rights of all states in the region to existence;

(ii) the current frustration and polarisation in the Arab world has tended to increase the importance of this Conference in Arab eyes, as an opportunity to remind world opinion that the situation in the region is deteriorating, and the

/plight



plight of the Palestinians becoming more serious. The question of whether or not the Europeans attend this Conference will consequently be more important to our friends in the Arab world than it would have been if the peace process were advancing, and the Ambassadors of the Ten in Cairo have already been urged by the Egyptian Government that the Europeans should be represented at a high level.

(iii) the friends of Israel in this country have asked us not to participate in the Conference. The Americans have made clear that they will not attend.

Sir Geoffrey Howe discussed the matter on 22 July with M. Cheysson, who would like the Ten to stick together as far as possible and who thought that this could best be done by working for a common decision to attend purely as observers (though the Greeks may well attend as full participants whatever the rest do). Sir Geoffrey Howe is inclined to agree with this analysis. We followed this path at the Namibia Conference. It has the advantage that we could make our voice heard at the Conference while not being associated with a concluding document which is likely to be unhelpful to the cause of peace. If the Ten (or a large majority of them) took this position it would help to preserve a coherent European approach in public to the problems of the Middle East. Cheysson agreed that the French would be prepared to take the lead in working for such a solution if we were prepared to support it. In doing so, we would reserve the right to reconsider our position if it became clear that the Ten were nevertheless likely to be badly split.

Yours ever

John Holmes

HJ

(B J P Fall)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

M/East
Situation
PT 11

25 JUL 1983

