

Pl. file

PRESIDENT DE KLERK'S SPEECH:

PRESS STATEMENT

We warmly welcome the decision to release Mr Mandela. This is an historic landmark on the road to a new South Africa. We have long urged the South African Government to set him free. President de Klerk is to be congratulated on his decision.

Mr Mandela will have a major role to play in shaping his country's future. His release will give an opportunity for all parties in South Africa to make progress towards a peaceful solution, through negotiations on a constitution fair to the whole population. We encourage them to do so.

The South African Government has taken major steps to open the way to start negotiations in accordance with the negotiating concept proposed by the Commonwealth Eminent Persons' Group. We look to the ANC and other groups to respond positively and peacefully to the offer now being made to join in negotiations to work out a new constitution for South Africa.

The changes now taking place in South Africa vindicate a policy of contact rather than isolation. We do not see that cultural, scientific or academic boycotts make sense or contribute to the weakening of apartheid. In future we shall not discourage artists, scientists and academics from going to South Africa or from joining in meetings with South Africans. We hope that individuals will take advantage of such opportunities to promote dialogue among South Africans. We shall consider further positive steps as soon as Mr Mandela is released.

The Prime Minister looks forward to having an early opportunity of discussing these encouraging developments with both President de Klerk and Mr Mandela. She has invited President de Klerk to an early meeting at Chequers. She will similarly invite Mr Mandela to make a visit to the United Kingdom when he is free.