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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

26 January 1983

*New John*

*Yes*

*Prime Minister:*

*Agree that the Duke of Edinburgh may be advised that he should visit Zimbabwe as proposed*

Visit of the Duke of Edinburgh to Zimbabwe:  
20/21 May 1983

*26/1*

As President of the Royal Agricultural Society of the Commonwealth, the Duke of Edinburgh plans to attend the Society's Conference in Harare on 20/21 May. Although no official announcement has yet been made, the Duke's Private Secretary told the Zimbabweans of the proposed visit last November and they are making detailed arrangements. It follows immediately after the Society's Symposium in Lusaka on 18/19 May which the Duke is also attending.

At its meeting on 24 November 1982 the Royal Visits Committee had some reservations about the Zimbabwe visit because of the difficult political situation at that time. On balance it favoured the visit going ahead as planned, but recommended that, because of the possibility that the situation might deteriorate, the Prime Minister should be consulted. Since then Mr Onslow has visited Zimbabwe and a copy of his report has been sent to the Prime Minister.

Although the political and security situation in Zimbabwe remains a cause for concern, we do not think that there is any reason at this stage to advise the Duke of Edinburgh to reconsider his travel plans. Most of the security problem is confined to Matabeleland and there are no plans for the Duke of Edinburgh to travel outside Harare. We would, of course, keep the situation under review.

Although the Duke of Edinburgh's visit would be in connection with an international conference, it is likely to have useful side effects both as regards our bilateral relations and as a boost for white morale within Zimbabwe.

Buckingham Palace are anxious to make an official announcement of the visit as soon as possible. I should be grateful to know whether the Prime Minister agrees to the visit going ahead as planned.

*[Handwritten signature]*  
(R B Bone)  
Private Secretary

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ROYAL FAMILY

31 January 1983

Visit of the Duke of Edinburgh to Zimbabwe

Thank you for your letter of 26 January.

The Prime Minister agrees that it is desirable that the visit by the Duke of Edinburgh should go ahead as planned.

JOHN COLES

Roger Bone, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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