

**Talking Points for Mr. Stephen Mathias,
Assistant Secretary-General for Legal Affairs**

**for the Conference hosted by the University of London,
“Dag Hammarskjöld’s Plane Crash: The Continuing
Search for Truth” - Thursday, 29 February 2024**

Thank you for inviting me to speak to you today. I am grateful to the University of London for organizing this important forum. I am also encouraged by the significant interest in this matter.

In his remarks at the wreath-laying ceremony commemorating the 62nd anniversary of the death of former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld in September 2023, the Secretary-General welcomed General Assembly resolution 77/252, adopted in December 2022, to continue the investigation into the tragic crash in which Dag Hammarskjöld and the party accompanying him died.

In his remarks, the Secretary-General noted:

“With passion and compassion, courage and curiosity, diplomatic skill and boundless stamina, Dag Hammarskjöld lived – and died – for the ideals of our United Nations.

“We have a shared responsibility to pursue the truth – for Dag Hammarskjöld and those who died alongside him, for their loved ones, and for the United Nations and the people we serve. I remain personally committed to that quest.”

By way of background, the General Assembly’s mandate for the investigation has been, in particular, to review information received and possible new information made available by Member States, including by private individuals and private entities, to assess its “probative value”, and to draw conclusions from the investigations already conducted to determine the cause of the crash.

The Secretary-General is encouraged by the progress that has been made in the investigation since 2017 by the Eminent Person, Judge Mohamed Chande Othman, former Chief Justice of Tanzania, and, previously, by the Independent Panel of Experts, appointed by the Secretary-General pursuant to successive General Assembly resolutions.

The Secretary-General has expressed his gratitude to the Eminent Person in his reports to the General Assembly on the progress of the investigation, and has recognized the Eminent Person for his excellent work.

In his letter dated 25 August 2022 to the President of the General Assembly, by which the Secretary-General transmitted to the General Assembly the Eminent Person's most recent report (A/76/892), the Secretary-General noted that the Eminent Person had received significant new information and that further advancements in the body of knowledge had been made.

By way of example, relevant information was provided in the areas of: (i) probable intercepts by Member States of relevant radio communications; (ii) the capacity of the armed forces of Katanga and others, to have conducted a possible attack; (iii) the presence in the area of foreign paramilitary and intelligence personnel; and (iv) new information relevant to the context and surrounding events of 1961.

The Secretary-General also noted that the Eminent Person assessed it to remain plausible that an external attack or threat was a cause of the crash, and the Eminent Person concluded that, given the growing body of evidence, there remained only a limited number of hypotheses to explain what occurred on that fateful night.

At the same time, the Eminent Person concluded that he had not been able to draw a conclusion as to the cause of the crash, and that it would be neither judicious nor responsible at this point to reach a conclusion as to the cause based on presently available but incomplete information.

In his letter to the General Assembly, the Secretary-General expressed his gratitude to Member States, independent high-ranking officials appointed by Member States (Independent Appointees) to conduct reviews of their intelligence, security and defence files, and to private individuals and entities for their cooperation with the Eminent Person.

At the same time, the Secretary-General took note of the Eminent Person's assessment that: (i) no significant information had been provided to the Eminent Person by key Member States since 2017; (ii) it was almost certain that further relevant information existed; and (iii) Member States had to demonstrate that they had conducted a full review of their records and archives. The Secretary-General also noted the Eminent Person's assessment that Independent Appointees might need more time to provide information.

In the light of this, the Secretary-General, in his letter to the President of the General Assembly, accepted the Eminent Person's key recommendations in his report, namely, that: (i) an independent person be appointed to continue the investigation; (ii) key Member States again be urged to appoint or reappoint Independent Appointees to determine whether relevant information exists in their archives; and (iii) all Member States be encouraged to make assistance available to the investigation.

Consistent with the Secretary-General's letter to the General Assembly, as well as the Eminent Person's recommendations, the General Assembly, at the end of December 2022, extended the Eminent Person's mandate (A/RES/77/252).

Also pursuant to General Assembly resolution 77/252, the Secretary-General is requested to report to the General Assembly before the end of the seventy-eighth session on the progress of the investigation, that is, at the end of the summer.

In support of the investigation, the Secretary-General is personally engaging with Member States. As indicated in his remarks during the wreath-laying ceremony in September 2023, the Secretary-General recently wrote to relevant Member States.

Echoing General Assembly resolution 77/252, the Secretary-General called on Member States to cooperate with the Eminent Person and to ensure that they have conducted a full review of their archives and records.

In closing, I wish to reiterate the Secretary-General's personal commitment to this matter.

And given the short time available until the next report is to be submitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, it remains our shared responsibility to pursue, with renewed urgency, the full truth of what happened on that fateful night in 1961.

Thank you for your attention.