

**HIGH COMMISSIONER MACENJE MAZOKA**  
**TALKING NOTES ON DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD'S PLANE CRASH:**  
**THE CONTINUING SEARCH FOR TRUTH**  
**NEXT STEPS FOR THE UN COMMISSION OF INQUIRY**  
**29TH FEBRUARY 2024**

Thank you to my esteemed colleagues from the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, Westminster UNA and the School of Advanced Study at the University of London for the opportunity to offer a few remarks before we begin today's engagements.

How long can truth be concealed? How far – or close - are we to uncovering the truth of what brought down Dag Hammarskjöld's plane in which he and 14 other UN officers perished? Will what happened on that fateful day, 18th September 1961, in Northern Rhodesia's Ndola, ever be told?

The crash happened at the backdrop of a bloody civil war immediately following Congo's independence from Belgium, between Congolese nationalists and a secessionist group in the mineral-rich region of Katanga led by Moisé Tshombe. The Swedish diplomat and his delegation were headed to Ndola in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) to negotiate a cease-fire with Tshombe where his plane was reportedly brought down. The United Nations had sent peacekeepers into Congo, who ultimately found themselves at war with Katangan separatists and European mercenaries, who were backed by Western

mining interests. Other scholars and researchers have contrary opinions, including that “the pilot had miscalculated the height of the tree line and ploughed into the forest canopy”.

And here we are, 63 years later, still seeking the truth. Zambia, like many others, want to know why the plane carrying a man on a mission to secure a ceasefire between factions in then Zaire’s Katanga region, went down, claiming his life. Hammerskjöld’s death reminds us that we should continue to strive for a world where differences are resolved through peaceful pathways and not by violence because the consequences come with a high price tag.

Zambia’s founding father – Dr. Kenneth Kaunda, was also championing the same objective of securing peace in the region, so he found a kindred spirit in Hammerskjöld. In 1970, Dr Kaunda declared the crash site, a few miles away from the Ndola airport, a national monument. 27 years later, in 1997, it was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Zambia will never forget this peacemaker who lost his life on our soil.

Something we have never forgotten. He is immortalised in Zambia both with the Heritage site and the Dag Hammarskjöld Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies (DHIPS) at the Copperbelt University. Because we know that Instability anywhere is a threat to instability everywhere. Unearthing the truth around the death of this peacemaker should continue to be a priority so we can

understand, move forward and perhaps even hold someone to account for our collective loss.

Today's programme is fully-packed, featuring distinguished scholars and researchers on reviewing investigations into the plane crash that claimed several lives, including that of Hammerskjöld on Zambia soil. Zambia fully supports any efforts at unravelling the truth and will continue to cooperate with any efforts and entities that will be established for this purpose. Thank you