

United Nations Association

Westminster Branch

Campaigning for a strong, credible and effective UN



17 November 2014

Enquiry into the deaths of Dag Hammarskjöld and 15 others

HE Mr Sam Kutesa, President of the UN General Assembly, has put the Report of the Hammarskjöld Commission on its agenda for discussion on 15 December 2014 (Item 128). This Report examines evidence relating to the deaths of UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld, his staff and crew, when their plane crashed near Ndola airport in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) on the night of 17-18 September 1961. Hammarskjöld was on a UN mission to bring peace to the Congo (now the DRC).

The Report was written by four retired jurists of the highest calibre and repute from different countries, working voluntarily and wholly free of any national or financial interests. It concludes that the matter justifies further and fuller investigation. It was presented to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon who in March this year stated: "It is my assessment that the documentation presented by the Hammarskjöld Commission includes new evidence. The unparalleled service and sacrifice of Dag Hammarskjöld and his legacy within the United Nations and beyond compels us to seek the whole truth of the circumstances leading to his tragic death and that of the members of the party accompanying him." Mr Ban Ki-moon offered the General Assembly three different options to follow up.

We owe it to the deceased, to their families and relatives, and also to the wider global community, to undertake everything possible to establish the truth. To those who insist it is a waste of time to review such events from history, we would argue that the injustice felt at the time still resonates today. This relates to the role of the UN, to the treatment of colonised nations in Africa, to the conduct of the superpowers and also of multi-nationals. At a time when critics of the UN System and its Member States challenge its determination to manifest the principle of transparency, it is on such issues that it and they will be judged.

We therefore urge all UN Member States to engage in the debate on 15 December, endorsing all steps necessary to support a further investigation, as an act of justice to all those who have sacrificed their lives while on duty for the United Nations.

David Wardrop, Chairman, and those listed on the following two pages

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