

Torsten Örn, Lusaka, Febr 7, 2005

Plenary 2: Healing the Wounds of Conflict through
Tourism, Culture and Sport

Conference on “Peace through Tourism”

Mr Chairman, President Kaunda, Honourable
Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all – thank you for your kind invitation to let me come here and address this distinguished gathering. I feel deeply honoured.

You have asked me to say a few words on the man, whose memorial some of us visited in Ndola yesterday. On Dag Hammarskjöld, the late Secretary-General of the UN, his visions for peace, his involvement in tourism and the interconnections between peace, tourism and environment.

As you may know, we are this year celebrating the centenary of his birth. There will be a number of manifestations not only in Sweden, but also here in Zambia, in New York and in other places. Manifestations directed towards the future of the UN and the world order.

Of all Swedes involved in international affairs during the last century Dag Hammarskjöld was undoubtedly the one who made the greatest impact on the international arena. More than 40 years after his death the UN is still not to be understood without reference to him, his achievements and his visions.

Unfortunately I never had the privilege to work for him myself, but I met him and he was very much an

icon for the internationally minded youth of my country. One of my first contacts with him was in 1953, when he was still a member of the Swedish Cabinet. I was president of the students' association for the UN at Uppsala University and we invited him to come and give us a talk. He had accepted, but the Security Council was quicker and made him go to New York to become Secretary-General a week before our session should have taken place. The last time I saw him was in the Delegates' Dining Room at UN Headquarters in New York on Sept. 11, 1961. I had just joined the Swedish Mission to the UN and he left for the Congo the following day. That was the journey that brought him to Ndola.

Like many of you I had never visited the Crash Site before and I was duly impressed by what we saw. I think the Zambian Government is doing an admirable job to maintain the place as a dignified memorial. Let me add that I have also heard much about the Dag Hammarskjöld Living Memorial Initiative, taken and sustained by the Zambian Government. A most laudable and forward looking initiative, worthy of a country that prides itself of 40 years of peace.

As Dag Hammarskjöld saw it, the UN should not remain a static conference machinery for resolving conflicts of interest and ideology, but develop into a dynamic instrument through which governments should seek reconciliation, and which should also develop proper forms of executive action of its own, undertaken on behalf of all member states and aimed at forestalling as well as resolving conflicts. That meant that the Secretary-General sometimes had to take independent action in finding the necessary executive steps. Always, of course, relying on the UN Charter.

Hammaraskjöld, who was originally selected to become Secretary-General because he was considered much more a civil servant than a politician, soon became a master in interpreting the Charter in the interest of peace. There are a number of innovations which go back to his initiatives. Let me just mention quiet diplomacy, preventive diplomacy, UN-presences and UN peace-keeping operations. In the same vane we have later seen the development of confidence-building measures, on site-inspections and election-monitoring. As an old practioner in diplomacy I can tell you that there are no magic medicines in international relations, but these limited measures can go a long way to promote peace. And have many times done so.

All of this did not meet with enthusiasm from the great powers of the world, those who had a permanent seat and veto in the Security Council. Over the years Hammaraskjöld had his difficulties with most of them, but happily enough not all at the same time. He was also keen to underline that the UN was not primarily there for their sake, but for the benefit of all the smaller member states. In this he was greatly aided by the leaders of the Third World, such as Nehru of India, Nasser of Egypt, Tito of Yugoslavia and Nkrumah of Ghana. President Kaunda would certainly also have belonged to that group, had Zambia been Zambia before 1961.

At his disposal Dag Hammaraskjöld had a secretariat which he was keen to transform into an efficient international civil service guided by the highest principles of moral and political integrity.

On the whole Hammarskjöld was so successful in dealing with China, the Middle East and the emerging Africa that most countries were happy, as the saying went in New York, to “leave it to Dag” or to “let Dag do it”. That is what made what happened in Ndola so painfully tragic for the whole world.

If you want to get closer acquainted with his sometimes rather mystic personality read his posthumously published and translated diary. “Markings”. But I warn you – it is not an easy reading.

The world was larger in Hammarskjöld’s days. Larger in the sense that you needed considerably more time and a greater spirit of adventure to travel to distant places, than we do today. Few were the Prime Ministers or even Foreign Ministers who knew the world from their own experience. Harold Macmillan’s journey through Africa in 1960 – with his “wind of change”-speech in Cape Town and during which he also visited this country – was a rather rare thing. But Hammarskjöld was an inveterate traveller – almost an explorer – who thought nothing of going to places like Beijing, Nepal, Southern Africa and the Congo.

During his trip to Nepal he took photos on the Himalayas from the pilot’s cockpit which he sent together with an article to the National Geographic Magazine. From Japan he got inspiration to a number of Haiku poems. In Africa he often travelled with one of Joseph Conrad’s novels in his pocket.

Sometimes reflecting on Hammarskjöld one is reminded of the great Swedish 18th century botanist Carl Linnaeus, who sent his disciples all over the

world, Southern Africa included. For both their first geographical love was the wilderness and serenity of the mountains in Swedish Lapland under the Polar Circle. For years Hammarskjöld used to walk and climb there during his holidays and one of the classic walking routes was incidentally named after him last year. In the Swedish Academy of Literature – the one that distributes the Nobel Prize in Literature and of which he was a Member – Hammarskjöld did in fact give a memorial lecture on Linnaeus in 1957.

It is no coincidence that Dag Hammarskjöld's father had been one of the founders of the Swedish Tourist Association in 1885 and that he himself later became vice president of that organisation. In fact in his last will he left his newly acquired farm Backåkra in southern Sweden to the Swedish Tourist Association, which is now running it as a conference center. On the actual centenary of his birth, July 29 this summer, an important international gathering focusing on UN reforms, peace and development will take place there.

You will remember that it was round 1960 that Africa made its great entry into international affairs as an increasing number of independent countries joined the UN, with Hammarskjöld keenly encouraging the end of colonialism and all that went with it, racism and the like. His closest collaborator Ralph Bunche was in fact an Afro-American, who had suffered from racial discrimination in the American South. For Hammarskjöld there was never any doubt about human rights being universal.

Dag Hammarskjöld, the traveller and explorer, clearly saw the potential for tourism in what was then considered rather exotic places. Tourism as a mean of

bringing people together and diminishing prejudices, thus contributing to a more peaceful world. “Peace through Tourism” as you rightly say. Today when both young people and old people travel all over the globe there can be no doubt that ignorance about other people’s ways of life is disappearing. One would hope that deeper understanding and international empathy are taking its place. In a most tragic sense this is what we are now witnessing in the wake of the Tsunami, horrible as it was. Joint efforts to eradicate certain diseases in prospective tourist areas would, of course, also go a long way.

At the same time one would hope that tourism can generate a more diversified economy and help in creating greater economic stability and welfare in poorer countries. This is another very important factor, when we are trying to build a safer world. A world, where poverty is history, as Nelson Mandela put it the other day.

Natural resources are central both to tourism and to peace. Particularly here in Africa the human environment and what it has to offer is what attracts most visitors. We have learned over the last decades – since the first UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972 – that these resources are not to be taken for granted in all eternity, but have to be nursed very carefully for the benefit of future generations.

How interrelated this all is, was, I think, very succinctly expressed by the Nobel Peace Prize laureate Mrs Wangari Maathai from Kenya, the founder of the Green Belt Movement, in Oslo in December last year. She thought that the Nobel Committee in awarding her the Prize wanted to

recognize the links between the environment, democracy and peace. Many local and international wars, like those in West and Central Africa and the Middle East, she said, continue to be fought over resources. In the process human rights and democracy are denied. Unless we properly manage resources like forests, water, land, minerals and oil, we will not win the fight against poverty. And there will not be peace. Old conflicts will rage on and new resource wars will erupt. Not a bright future for tourism either, you might add.

But that is precisely where we are. I think Dag Hammarskjöld would have been very proud of such a far-sighted fellow Nobel Peace Prize winner.

Ladies and Gentlemen – you have an extremely important part to play in this globalized, interconnected world. Tourism should contribute to peace and there can be no tourism without peace!

I thank you for your attention and I wish you all possible success!