

Excellencies, dear colleague Ambassador Schweppe, Mr Chikvaidze, Mr. Appold, distinguished members of the UN staff in Geneva, ladies and gentlemen,

We have gathered here today to commemorate Dag Hammarskjöld, the second Secretary-General of the United Nations, on the fiftieth anniversary of his untimely death. Five decades is a long stretch of time, and the years that have passed since Hammarskjöld's plane went down outside Ndola in September 1961 have been remarkably eventful. We have seen the end of the Cold War, the spread of democracy, the emergence of regional organizations, and a communications revolution – but we have also been sensitized to the collective challenges posed by poverty, diseases, environmental problems and terrorism.

Dag Hammarskjöld's influence on the role and function of the United Nations was profound already in his own lifetime. But as the UN system evolved to meet these new developments – some of which were impossible to predict half a century ago – that influence also proved enduring. In some cases Hammarskjöld's most tangible contributions have been mainstreamed and consolidated. In other cases, the UN system has developed in ways that are new but nonetheless follow the lines of his philosophy and vision for the organization. I wish to briefly illustrate these points.

- Dag Hammarskjöld was an early and staunch advocate of Human Rights. Since his time, the international community has continuously strengthened the global structures to uphold and promote Human Rights. The work of the United Nations Human Rights Council, here in Geneva, is a key component in these efforts.

- Inspired by a suggestion from Canada's UN ambassador Lester Pearson, Hammarskjöld devised the first armed Peacekeeping Operation during the Suez Crisis in 1956. Relying on his creativity and legal judgment, Hammarskjöld managed in only a few weeks to conceive a kind of intervention that was not – and is still not – mentioned in the Charter of the UN. Since then, peacekeeping operations have been consolidated as one of the most important and visible tools of the United Nations. The instrument has evolved to take on increasingly complex situations and integrate military operations with political and civilian efforts.

- Hammarskjöld saw the independence of the Secretary-General and the international civil service as instrumental for the functioning of the United Nations. Today, the importance of this idea has grown in parallel with the expansion of the United Nations into a near-universal membership.

- Although his last efforts were devoted to finding solutions to a very difficult civil war in newly independent Congo, which required mounting a UN military force, and despite his creative efforts to ensure that the United Nations and its Secretary General would be helpful also to prevent wars and armed conflict, peace keeping and preventive diplomacy were far from the only areas Dag Hammarskjöld paid attention to as Secretary General. Being an economist by training and being guided by strong ethics which permeated all his work, he engaged wholeheartedly also in the development of the countries which were gaining independence from colonialism.

That engagement included extensive visits to the countries in question for discussions with the leadership of those nascent states.

This was the beginning also in making the United Nations also an important force for social and economic development across the world. One of the clearest manifestations of this today is the Millennium Development Goals, which unite the efforts of Member States and specialized agencies, funds and programmes throughout the UN system.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Not all of the United Nations developments have of course sprung from Dag Hammarskjöld's ideas. But all of the organizations developments reflect his ambition that the United Nations should be a dynamic instrument in the hands of its member states. It reflects his conclusion that the United Nations needs to constantly evolve in order to retain its relevance. They reflect his conviction that the Charter of the United Nations must not be worshipped as an immutable document, but be used to address the challenges of the time. They reflect his skill in finding creative, constructive solutions to international problems.

They reflect, essentially, a strong combination of *vision* and *pragmatism*.

Now, *pragmatism* might not appear to be the expression of a *vision*.

But this original combination of pragmatism and vision is where Dag Hammarskjöld's legacy finds its strength. It is the vision not of an end state but of continuous progress. Pragmatism and vision is the reason why Hammarskjöld's legacy has stood the test of time, and the reason why it will remain meaningful for as long as we uphold our commitment to advancing our relations. It is the key to a functioning multilateral system, and it befalls us all – *collectively* – to realize it. This year, which marks the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Dag Hammarskjöld, few things are more important to remind of than this.

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Today's event – the *vernissage* of Uwe Appold's painting suite *Moments of Silence* – does, powerfully remind us also of Dag Hammarskjöld's personality. Hammarskjöld was a profoundly spiritual and philosophical man, and he nurtured a keen interest in culture. He was student of philosophy during his university years which continued his whole life. In his spare time, he did often translate poetry as a means of relaxation. He was a member of the Swedish Academy, which selects the Nobel laureates in literature and during his time as a member of the academy legends like Winston Churchill, Albert Camus, Ernest Hemingway all received the prize. His many personal friendships with influential authors like John Steinbeck among others is also well know.

He also took an active interest in the interior decorations of the United Nations headquarters and started the idea with UN day concerts by inviting grand artist to the UN headquarters in New York. Another example of his great interest in philosophy and spirituality is his creation of the meditation room in the headquarters building in New York with the famous quote: “this house, dedicated to work and debate in the service of peace, should have one room dedicated to silence in the outward sense and stillness in the inner sense.

How strong his spiritual and religious side was, was largely unknown until after his death, when a diary was found in which he had chronicled his thoughts and his “negotiations with myself, and with God”. The book was published posthumously

named as Markings, and in it is the haiku poems in this book that caught the German artist Mr. Uwe Appold's imagination and brought him to visit Hammarskjölds favorite place in the south of Sweden- Backåkra- and its surrounding beautiful landscape which inspired Mr. Appolds and his fantastic paintings that has brought us here today. I would like to thank the artist, Mr. Appold, as well as my distinguished colleague, the German ambassador Reinhard Schweppe, for their kind support in contributing in arranging this event today.

I am personally very honored, as a representative of Hammarskjölds native Sweden, to take part in the celebration of this mans impressive legacy.

Thank you