



THE PRESIDENT  
OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

27 August 2021

Excellency,

Further to my letter dated 13 July 2021, I have the honour to circulate herewith a concept note and preliminary program for the General Assembly informal commemorative meeting to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the death of former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld. The meeting will take place on Thursday, 9 September 2021, at 10 a.m., at the General Assembly Hall, UN Headquarters, in cooperation with the Permanent Missions of Sweden and Tunisia, as well as the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation.

Please note that there will be no pre-determined list of speakers for this event. Due to the limited time available for the meeting, delegations are encouraged to pose questions to the panel and make interventions limited to two minutes.

For further information, your office may contact Ms. Inga Kanchaveli, Senior Adviser, Office of the President of the General Assembly at [inga.kanchaveli@un.org](mailto:inga.kanchaveli@un.org).

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Volkan Bozkir'.

Volkan BOZKIR

All Permanent Representatives and  
Permanent Observers to the United Nations  
New York



# General Assembly Informal Commemorative Meeting to Mark the 60th Anniversary of the Death of Former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld (1905 – 1961)

## Interactive Panel discussion on “Enabling an International Civil Service for the 21st Century”

### Background and context

2021 marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the plane crash in which Dag Hammarskjöld, and the crew and other passengers accompanying him, died in Ndola, Zambia. Hammarskjöld is remembered as a skilled mediator and diplomat whose advocacy for decolonisation and dedication to international cooperation saw the UN through a period of intense change in an era characterised by great power competition. The historical contributions of his leadership as UN Secretary-General have had lasting impacts and many aspects of that legacy, particularly his defence of the values enshrined in the UN Charter, his dedication to strengthening the international civil service, and his commitment to adaptability and reform, remain relevant today.

In his 1961 speech at Oxford University, Hammarskjöld shared his detailed meditations on the purpose, values and legal basis for the international civil service. Special emphasis was given to the need to preserve its independence and international character, as well as individual international civil servants’ integrity, international loyalty, competence and efficiency. Over the years, subsequent Secretaries-General have sought to strengthen the international civil service through policies and reforms addressing its various vulnerabilities. In the past decade, increasing demands for accountability and the need to support a growing range of entities and activities have predominated. The international civil service has also had to adapt to internal structural changes and external factors related to an evolving geopolitical landscape, shifting attitudes toward multilateralism, and global challenges which either did not exist or were not well understood at the UN’s inception. To fulfil its mandate at a time when the multilateral system is facing unprecedented challenges, the UN needs a principled and effective international civil service that is equipped to tackle the challenges of the 21st century, supported by its member States.

Building on Hammarskjöld’s legacy, this event will explore means of supporting the international civil service in fulfilling its intended role. Panellists will focus on the primary challenges and opportunities facing the international civil service as well as the respective roles of Member States and UN leadership in addressing them.

### Partner

The Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation works to advance dialogue and policy for sustainable development and peace, building on Hammarskjöld’s legacy. Its work is organised in four thematic areas: Peacebuilding and sustaining peace, Agenda 2030, multilateralism, and repositioning the UN system. The latter area focuses on the ongoing UN development system (UNDS) and management reforms, and the principled, transformative leadership required for their successful implementation. As part of this work, the Foundation is exploring challenges and opportunities pertaining to UN leadership—including those facing the international civil service—and how they might be addressed. In 2019 and 2020, the Foundation published [a paper series](#) celebrating 100 years of international civil service, the report *The Art of Leadership in the United Nations: Framing What’s Blue*, and *The International Civil Service: A Reference Compendium for United Nations Personnel*.



# General Assembly Informal Commemorative Meeting to Mark the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Death of Former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld (1905 – 1961)

*Thursday, 9 September 2021, at 10:00 a.m., at the UN General Assembly Hall*

Hosted by the President of the General Assembly and co-organised by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and the UN Permanent Missions of Sweden and Tunisia

- 10.00 a.m.**                    **Opening**  
H.E. Mr. Volkan Bozkir, President of the General Assembly  
H.E. Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations
- Remarks by the co-organisers**  
H.E. Ms. Ann Linde, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden  
H.E. Mr. Othman Jerandi, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Migration and Tunisia Abroad
- 10.30 a.m.**                    **Introductory remarks by Moderator, Ms. Sigrid Gruener, Programme Director, Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation**
- 10.35 a.m.**                    **Interactive Panel: Enabling an International Civil Service for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**
- What are the primary challenges and opportunities facing the International Civil Service today?
  - How can member States strengthen the independence and integrity of the International Civil Service?
  - How does the UN promote norm-based, principled leadership among UN personnel, including their defence of the values and principles enshrined in the UN Charter?
  - How can the International Civil Service play a role in promoting the importance of multilateralism in addressing global challenges?
- 11.10 p.m.**                    **Q&A segment with the panel:** questions and/or comments from Member States and Observers are warmly welcomed.
- 12.00 p.m.**                    **Conclusion.**