



**INVITING YOU TO PARTICIPATE IN PLANTING A TREE IN HONOUR OF
DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD (UN SECRETARY GENERAL 1953-1961): A MEMORIAL
TO REVIVE HIS VISION OF SELF-DETERMINATION IN THIS 75TH YEAR OF THE UNITED NATIONS.**



On 13 September 2020, the West Papua Womens Office in Docklands and the Democratic Republic of Congo Community in Victoria are planting a tree in honour of Dag Hammarskjöld, the UN Secretary-General found dead on 18 September 1961 after a plane crash near the border of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) where he was mediating post-independence conflict. His death, which is still being investigated, precluded him from presenting a decolonisation program to the 1961 UN General Assembly for the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Dutch-Nieuw Guinea (West Papua) that would have deterred Indonesia from invading the territory in 1962 and thus rendered unnecessary the agreement that facilitated its incorporation of the territory.

Individuals and organisations are invited to join the memorial by creating their own tree-planting ceremony and emailing a 2-minute video of it to the West Papua Womens office. We particularly invite diaspora communities from places that have been decolonised and those that are still struggling to achieve self-determination. The videos will be presented to UN Sec-General Guterres on 29 September—the date of Mr Hammarskjöld’s burial in Sweden in 1961—by Herman Wainggai, the ULMWP Special Mission to the UN.

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DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD *was an outstanding civil servant who ensured that UN processes were based on the principles of international law espoused in the UN Charter. He was head of the UN when colonies were experiencing the sweet, and bitter, realities of grounding their dreams of independence, and when colonial powers were crumbling in the face of rejection and loss of income. The messy divorces were further complicated by the USA and the former Soviet Union (USSR) as they competed for supremacy in a new world order. The Secretary-General’s moral leadership, personal integrity, and dedication to implementing self-determination were crucial for the emerging states. West Papua and Democratic Republic of Congo, both extremely wealthy territories, were the most immediately—and enduringly—affected by his death.*

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO *Secretary-General Hammarskjöld was killed during a flight to the mineral-rich provinces of Katanga (copper, cobalt, uranium) and South Kasai (diamonds) to mediate with secessionists after the Belgian colony’s independence in June 1960. Belgium had truncated the political process—from initial round-table discussion in January 1960, to general election in May, to independence in June—and by July foreign mercenaries were inciting chaos, with mutinies in the army and massacres in villages. With both Cold War combatants (USA and USSR) distributing weapons, the Sec-General felt compelled to raise and dispatch a UN Peacekeeping Force (between 1960 and 1963 this included 4,500 Indonesian troops). But not even 20,000 UN troops could prevent Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba from being assassinated (13th—17th January 1961). Nor were they able to protect their own boss during his ill-fated trip to the Congo (13th—17th September 1961).*

WEST PAPUA *Unlike Belgium in its Non-Self-Governing Territory, the Netherlands had been reporting to the UN on political, economic, social and education development in West Papua since 1950. However, neighbouring Indonesia wanted sovereign-rights over the territory and spent 1954, 1955, 1956, and 1957 attempting—but failing—to amass political support in the UN General Assembly for its claim. It then amassed military hardware from both the Cold War combatants to invade and occupy what it called a ‘Dutch puppet state’. Seeking to avoid war, Secretary-General Hammarskjöld developed a legal counter-offensive with the Netherlands Government, President Kennedy, the Economic Council of New York, and even General MacArthur (who directed the WWII counter-offensive in Dutch New Guinea). His was a decolonisation program that involved the UN recognizing Papuan sovereignty over Papuan land, and the placement of UN technical officers to assist an independent government for five years. Hammarskjöld’s death meant that he was not able to present the OPEX program to the 1961 UN General Assembly, and without his authoritative—and informed—presence the General Assembly didn’t pass the motion. For Indonesia, the UN’s betrayal of self-determination in the context of West Papua was a green light to invade the territory (January 1962) and this, in turn, paved passage for a US-driven UN-sponsored Agreement that facilitated Indonesia’s incorporation of West Papua.*

IS PLANTING A TREE-MEMORIAL FOR DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD ALSO SEEDING A UN VOTE FOR WEST PAPUA?

We hope that hundreds of trees planted as memorials for Dag Hammarskjöld will inform and fortify the activism of individuals, NGOs and UN member-states for a motion in the General Assembly where West Papuans current, and historical, arguments for right of sovereignty over their own land can be debated.

Many UN member-states now recognise that their failure to uphold West Papuans right to self-determination in November 1961 enabled the brutal subjugation of an indigenous people by a state that has never recognised the principle of self-determination (despite being a UN member since 1950). They also recognise that despite Indonesia's more recent claims of 'being a democracy' and 'developing West Papua', its policies and practices have, in fact, little changed since 1962. Why else would they constitute just 30% of the population in 2010 when they were 99% in 1961? And are calculated to be just 15% of the population in 2030?

In 2019 the Pacific Islands Forum (18 UN member-states, including Australia and New Zealand) and the African Caribbean Pacific Group (79 member-states) passed motions of preparatory support for West Papua's registration on the UN Decolonisation List. The successful passage of a motion requires 2/3 majority support, meaning 130 of the 193 UN member-states. So the support of 30 more states is required.

THE LEGAL UNDERPINNINGS OF HAMMARSKJÖLD'S PURSUIT OF SELF-DETERMINATION IN WEST PAPUA

The principle of self-determination is prominently embodied in the Charter of the United Nations:

To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace (Art. 1, Par. 2).

Its inclusion in the UN Charter marks the universal recognition of the principle as fundamental to the maintenance of friendly relations and peace among states. Article 15 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948 (GA Res. 217 A) as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations, also recognises that:

1. *Everyone has the right to a nationality.*
2. *No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.*

Dag Hammarskjöld was actively involved in, showed leadership of, and made personal sacrifices to implement national self-determination and peace. After his death, these principles continued to be recognised—as a right of all peoples—in the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights (1966) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966).

All peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development (Art. 1, Par. 1).

FOR MORE about Dag Hammarskjöld's contributions to fractious understandings of justice in the world, and the sacrifices he made to realise the right of the peoples of West Papua and Democratic Republic of Congo:

<https://dfait.federalrepublicofwestpapua.org/document/dag-hammarskjold-west-papua-and-the-un/>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dag_Hammarskj%C3%B6ld

Note that the West Papuan people—including church and religious organisations, tribe councils, political parties, womens organsiations, student groups, and the provincial parliaments—have agreed that the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP) is the vehicle for their self-determination and independence negotiations with the Republic of Indonesia under the auspice of the United Nations.