

Keynote Lectures

» Dag Hammarskjöld – Ethics, Solidarity and Global Leadership

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‘Sit on the ground and talk to people.
That’s the most important thing.’

It was not a social anthropologist who provided this advice. Rather, this was the answer given by Dag Hammarskjöld, the second Secretary-General of the United Nations, when asked over dinner by his friend John Steinbeck what would matter most during a world tour.¹ He had followed a similar approach (though not necessarily sitting on the ground while talking to the people) during a five-week trip through large parts of Africa. The journey, from 22 December 1959 to the end of January 1960, took him to more than 20 countries on the continent, over which the ‘winds of change’ had begun to blow. Upon his return on 31 January, he declared:

I would say that this experience over this long journey makes me less inclined than ever to generalize, less than ever willing to say this or that about Africa or this or that about the Africans, because just as there is very much in common, especially the aspirations, there is also an enormous diversity of problems, of attitudes, and of traditions. In such a way, the journey makes me both a little bit wiser and a lot more humble.²

In a subsequent press conference, Hammarskjöld elaborated on the approach he had outlined to his friend Steinbeck:

¹ Per Lind and Bengt Thelin, ‘Nature and Culture: Two Necessities of Life’, in Sten Ask and Anna Mark-Jungkvist (eds), *The Adventure of Peace: Dag Hammarskjöld and the Future of the UN*, New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan 2005, p. 99 (quoted in Roger Lipsey, ‘Dag Hammarskjöld and *Markings*: A Reconsideration’, *Spiritus. A Journal of Christian Spirituality*, vol. 11, no. 1, spring 2011, p. 89).

² ‘Airport Statement on Return from African Trip’, New York, 31 January 1960 (UN Press Release SG/895, 31 January 1960), in Andrew W. Cordier and Wilder Foote (eds), *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations. Volume V: Dag Hammarskjöld 1960-1961*, New York and London: Columbia University Press 1975, p. 522.

You can say that to stay in a country one night or two nights cannot give much of an experience. Well, first of all, it can. It can because, if you break through the walls and if you have the necessary background knowledge, even a talk of one hour can tell you more than volumes [...] It is not in particular what you can learn in this or that city or from this or that man that gives you valuable understanding of the situation. It is what he says and what you see in one city seen in the light of what you have heard others say and what you have seen in other cities.³

Hammar skjöld's journey to Africa was not a mere sightseeing excursion, nor what we in current jargon would call a 'quick and dirty' consultancy job. It was not merely a symbolic gesture by someone already preoccupied with all the problems of the world at the height of the Cold War. Hammar skjöld described it in the same press conference as 'a strictly professional trip for study, for information'.⁴ The trip attested to his general mindset and practice of seeking dialogue with others to explore the common ground of humanity.

During the inauguration of the Congress for International Cooperation in Africa at the University Institute of Somalia on 14 January 1960 he made reference to the Renaissance (a catchword that would resurface in the African context 40 years later). Commenting on the main challenges facing African leaders, he stated:

The two problems they will have to solve is to create an international world, a world of universality and unity, and on the other hand to save not only what I would like to call the personality of Africa, but the personality of each country, each group, in this wonderfully rich continent [...] what is needed is unity with diversity, diversity respected within the framework of an even deeper respect for unity.⁵

This pledge to reconcile the unique with the universal was by no means an appeal to abandon globally applicable standards, values and norms in favour of particularism. For him, there existed a dialectical relationship between the local and the global in the sense of the national and the international. At Stanford University in Palo Alto nearly five years earlier, in June 1955, he had devoted an address entitled 'The World and the Nation' to this inter-relatedness. In his talk, he defined the fundamental challenge as follows: 'The question is not either the nation *or* the world.

3 'From Transcript of Press Conference.' New York, 4 February 1960 (UN Note to Correspondents No. 2108, 4 February 1960), in *ibid.*, p. 525.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 524.

5 'Extemporaneous Remarks at Inauguration of the Congress for International Cooperation in Africa at the University Institute of Somalia', Mogadiscio, Somalia, 14 January 1960, in *ibid.*, p. 515.

It is rather, how to serve the world by service to our nation, and how to serve the nation by service to the world.⁶

He considered the United Nations as the relevant link to enhance this cross-fertilisation and to ensure that we do not get lost in particular obscurantism in hiding behind the shield of national sovereignty. For him, the United Nations was ‘an expression of our will to find a synthesis between the nation and the world’.⁷ When upon his return from his visit to the African countries, a journalist inquired at the press conference whether the ideological trends in Africa ‘stem from the inner realities facing African life today or whether they reflect the often repeated clichés of foreign ideology’, Hammarskjöld’s clarification left no doubt:

I do not think that the rights of man is a foreign ideology to any people and that, I think, is the key to the whole ideological structure in Africa at present. It may be that the most eloquent and the most revolutionary expressions of the rights of man are to be found in Western philosophers and Western thinking, but that certainly does not make the idea a Western idea imposed on anybody.⁸



Partnership and solidarity are the foundations of the United Nations. Photo: Paul Fris

The fundamental ethics that were his moral compass in his commitments as a global leader are obvious in these convictions, which guided his engagement not only with African realities. Not surprisingly, his role as the highest international civil servant representing the global governance institution established after the Second World War as the United Nations was based on values that were permeated by a notion of solidarity. On 26 January 1960, towards the end of his African journey, he declared at the second session of the Economic Commission of Africa in Tangier:

Partnership and solidarity are the foundations of the United Nations and it is in order to translate these principles into practical measures of economic cooperation that we are gathered today in this hall [...] The emergence of Africa on the world scene, more than any other single phenomenon, has forced us to reappraise and rethink the nature of relationships among peoples at different stages of development, and the conditions of a new synthesis making room for an accelerated growth and development of Africa.⁹

6 ‘The World and the Nation’, Commencement Address at Stanford University, Palo Alto, California, 19 June 1955 (UN Press Release SG/426, 18 June 1955), in Andrew W. Cordier and Wilder Foote (eds), *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations. Volume II: Dag Hammarskjöld 1953-1956*, New York and London: Columbia University Press 1975, p. 509.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 512.

8 ‘From Transcript of Press Conference’, *op. cit.*, pp. 533-4.

9 ‘Statement at the Second Session of the Economic Commission for Africa’, Tangier, Morocco, 26 January 1960 (UN Press Release SG/890, 25 January 1960), in Andrew W. Cordier and Wilder Foote (eds), *Public Papers ... Volume V, op. cit.*, p. 517.

Hammarskjöld then reverted to a speech he had given a few months earlier at the University of Lund in Sweden, with the title ‘Asia, Africa, and the West’. It attests to the enlightened views of the Secretary-General. On that occasion, he had reminded his audience that ‘nobody should forget that colonization reflected a basic approach which may have been well founded in certain limited respects, but which often mirrored false claims, particularly when it touched on spiritual development. Applied generally, it was untenable.’¹⁰

Commenting on the Western perspectives of the early 20th century, Hammarskjöld found it striking ‘how much they did *not* see and did *not* hear, and how even their most positive attempts at entering into a world of different thoughts and emotions were colored by an unthinking, self-assured superiority.’¹¹ For Hammarskjöld, the ‘richest satisfaction’ lay in ‘meeting different spiritual traditions and their representatives’, provided one ‘approaches them on an equal footing and with a common future goal in mind’. He was confident that this approach would ensure progress ‘in the direction of a human community which, while retaining the special character of individuals and groups, has made use of what the various branches of the family of man have attained along different paths over thousands of years’.¹²

He clearly dismissed any claims to superiority over others based on any kind of naturalist concept of dominance rooted in supposed biological advancement and also questioned the legitimacy sought by dominant classes to justify their privileges:

The health and strength of a community depend on every citizen’s feeling of solidarity with the other citizens, and on his willingness, in the name of this solidarity, to shoulder his part of the burdens and responsibilities of the community. The same is of course true of humanity as a whole. And just [as] it cannot be argued that within a community an economic upper class holds its favored position by virtue of greater ability, as a quality which is, as it were, vested in the group by nature, so it is, of course, impossible to maintain this in regard to nations in their mutual relationships.¹³

He therefore concluded:

We thus live in a world where, no more internationally than nationally, any distinct group can claim superiority in mental gifts and potentialities

¹⁰ ‘Asia, Africa, and the West’, Address Before the Academic Association of the University of Lund, Lund, Sweden, 4 May 1959 (UN Press Release SG/813, 4 May 1959), in Andrew W. Cordier and Wilder Foote (eds), *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations. Volume IV: Dag Hammarskjöld 1958-1960*, New York and London: Columbia University Press 1974, p. 381.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 382 (original emphasis).

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 383.

of development [...] Those democratic ideals which demand equal opportunities for all should be applied also to peoples and races [...] no nation or group of nations can base its future on a claim of supremacy.¹⁴

He confidently proclaimed that ‘the Organization I represent...is based on a philosophy of solidarity’.¹⁵ His advice to Europe was that ‘the best and soundest way to perpetuate (its) cultural heritage is to meet other peoples and other cultures in humble respect for the unique gifts that they, in turn, have offered and still offer to humanity’ and reminds the continent’s peoples ‘that it is a sign of the highest culture to be really capable of listening, learning, and therefore also responding’.¹⁶

He concludes with a telling personal anecdote, shared with him by a colleague from Asia who was educated at European universities.¹⁷

He once told me how, in his early youth, he lived with and loved the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam. He thought he had made the original text entirely his own, until he came to Britain and became acquainted with Fitzgerald’s translation. Then, this in turn became – in the academic surroundings that began to transform him – his ‘real’ Rubaiyat [...] He returned home, however, and again found Omar Khayyam’s poems such as he had once made them his own. The pendulum kept swinging, and, he concluded, ‘even today I do not know which Rubaiyat is mine, Omar’s or Fitzgerald’s’.¹⁸

Hammarskjöld ends the story and his speech with the vision: ‘We must reach the day when...all of us can enjoy in common the Rubaiyat and the fact that we have it both in Omar’s and in Fitzgerald’s version.’¹⁹

His multicultural vision challenges the predominant hegemonic world-views. It promotes a counter-culture of global humanity seeking for commonalities while being based on respect for differences. By being a Swedish world citizen, combining a strong sense of cultural belonging with cosmopolitan openness, Hammarskjöld showed that firm roots in one’s own society, in its history and culture, are not obstacles or limitations but a valuable point of departure, provided they are not taken as the one and only absolute ‘truth’. Awareness of one’s own upbringing in a specific social context, anchoring one’s identity in a framework guided

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 384.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 385.

¹⁷ According to the editors it was Ahmed Bokhári, a UN Under-Secretary who died in December 1958. *Ibid.*, p. 380.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 386f.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 387.

by a set of values, allows for curiosity towards otherness and explorations of the unknown for one's own benefit and gain. There are no risks in entering a dialogue with 'strangers' if one knows where one comes from.

Hammarskjöld's exchanges with the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber testify to this conviction as does the dialogue he practised in search of solutions to conflicts and differences deeply entrenched in specific sets of values, norms or cultural socialisations. On 16 April 1958, five days after his re-election as the UN Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, in a letter to Buber expressed his admiration for Buber's philosophy 'of unity created "out of the manyfold"'.²⁰

Perhaps a little surprisingly, this exchange in its substance resonated to some extent with the later emancipatory gospel of the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*: seeming strangers, as Paulo Freire emphasised, can through mutual empathy become fellow human beings who can relate to one another despite all distinctions. In becoming aware of their commonality as human beings, specific knowledge – wrongly generalised as universal knowledge – can be modified and transformed through interaction and exchange among equals and thereby turned into common knowledge across boundaries. As Freire puts it:

The radical committed to human liberation, does not become the prisoner of a 'circle of certainty' within which reality is also imprisoned. On the contrary, the more radical the person is, the more fully he or she enters into reality so that, knowing it better, he or she can better transform it. This person is not afraid to meet people or enter into dialogue with them. This person does not consider himself or herself the proprietor of history or of all people, or the liberator of the oppressed; but he or she does commit himself or herself, within history, to fight at their side.²¹

In this sense, Dag Hammarskjöld – as the measured diplomat and loyal civil servant he was – displayed the virtues of a radical person.

Hammarskjöld also had a strong sense of the need for economic justice. In his last address to ECOSOC, he linked the principles of national sovereignty to the belief that international solidarity and social consciousness must go hand in hand by:

[...] accepting as a basic postulate the existence of a world community for which all nations share a common responsibility [...] to reduce the dis-



The introduction to the 16th annual report of the United Nations became Hammarskjöld's last programmatic statement. Submitted a month before his untimely death, it summarises his legacy in terms of ethics, solidarity and global leadership. Photo: UN Photo/MB

20 Quoted in Lou Marin, *Can we save true dialogue in an age of mistrust? The encounter of Dag Hammarskjöld and Martin Buber*, Uppsala: Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation 2010 (Critical Currents, no. 8), p. 11.

21 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York: Continuum 1996, p. 21.

parities in levels of living between nations, a responsibility parallel to that accepted earlier for greater economic and social equality within nations.²²

The introduction to the 16th annual report of the United Nations became Hammarskjöld's last programmatic statement. Submitted a month before his untimely death, it summarises his legacy in terms of ethics, solidarity and global leadership. It reiterated his firm belief in the equality of peoples and societies, as different from each other as these might be perceived to be:

In the Preamble to the Charter, Member nations have reaffirmed their faith 'in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small,' a principle which also has found many other expressions in the Charter. Thus, it restates the basic democratic principle of equal political rights, independently of the position of the individual or of the Member country in respect of its strength, as determined by territory, population or wealth. The words just quoted must, however, be considered as going further and imply an endorsement as well of a right to equal economic opportunities.²³

Importantly, Hammarskjöld once again does not content himself with proclaiming noble postulates by making lofty reference to an abstract equality. As a trained economist, who defended his PhD with no less a person than Gunnar Myrdal as disputant (who disagreed with Hammarskjöld on the argument in his thesis but advocated the award of the highest mark for the undisputable quality of his analyses), he never loses sight of the socioeconomic dimensions of inequality. It is therefore no coincidence that he returns to stress the right to equal economic opportunities:

So as to avoid any misunderstanding, the Charter directly states that the basic democratic principles are applicable to nations 'large and small' and to individuals without distinction 'as to race, sex, language and religion,' qualifications that obviously could be extended to cover other criteria such as, for example, those of an ideological character which have been used or may be used as a basis for political or economic discrimination [...] The demand for equal economic opportunities has, likewise, been – and remains – of specific significance in relation to those very countries which have more recently entered the international arena as new states. This is natural in view of the fact that, mostly, they have been in an unfavourable economic position, which is reflected in a much lower *per capita* income, rate of capital supply, and degree of technical

22 Quoted in Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, 'Poverty and Inequality – Challenges in the Era of Globalisation', in Sten Ask and Anna Mark-Jungkvist (eds), *op. cit.*, p. 222.

23 'Introduction to the Sixteenth Annual Report', New York, 17 August 1961, in Andrew W. Cordier and Wilder Foote (eds), *Public Papers ... Volume V, op.cit.*, p. 544.

development, while their political independence and sovereignty require a fair measure of economic stability and economic possibilities in order to gain substance and full viability.²⁴

This corresponds with his earlier and continued emphasis on the need to address the economic imbalances inherent in the existing world order. As he stressed in an address as early as February 1956:

The main trouble with the Economic and Social Council at present is that, in public opinion and in practice, the Council has not been given the place it should have in the hierarchy of the main organs of the United Nations. I guess that we are all agreed that economic and social problems should rank equal with political problems. In fact, sometimes I feel that they should, if anything, have priority.²⁵

He testified further to his awareness of the needs for global economic justice only a few months later in his opening statement during a debate on the world economic situation in ECOSOC. In his remarks, he bemoaned

the absence of a framework of international policy that compels the underdeveloped countries each to seek its own salvation in its own way without reference to wider horizons. How often have we not heard the voices of those who bewail the fact that this underdeveloped country is moving along the slippery path to autarky, that that country is neglecting its exports, whether agricultural or mineral, or that yet a third country is manipulating its exchange rates in a manner contrary to the letter and spirit of the Bretton Woods agreements? And yet how many of those who belabor the underdeveloped countries in this fashion have given adequate thought to the structure of world economic relationships which has forced these countries into unorthodox patterns of behavior?²⁶

The truly internationalist spirit in which the second Secretary-General acted, without fear or favour, during most of his eight years in office included awareness that gross socioeconomic disparities continued to contribute to global challenges. Tackling these disparities within a mindset of global solidarity was among the essentials Hammarskjöld reiterated in his last introduction to an annual report:

24 *Ibid.*, p. 545 (original italics).

25 'The UN – Its Ideologies and Activities', in Andrew W. Cordier and Wilder Foote (eds), *Public Papers ... Volume II*, *op. cit.*, p. 668.

26 '1. Statement in the Economic and Social Council Introducing Debate on the World Economic Situation', Geneva, 16 July 1956 (UN Press Release SG/493, 16 July 1956), in Andrew W. Cordier and Wilder Foote (eds), *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations. Volume III: Dag Hammarskjöld 1956-1957*, New York and London: Columbia University Press 1973, pp. 190f.

The exclusively international character of the Secretariat is not tied to its composition, but to the spirit in which it works and to its insulation from outside influences [...] Anyone of integrity, not subjected to undue pressure, can, regardless of his own views, readily act in an ‘exclusively international’ spirit.²⁷

As early as 1955, he had insisted on a definition of loyalty and integrity – two values at the core of his ethics – for the international civil service in a series of pioneering speeches over the space of ten days at three US universities, during which he emphasised the universal character of duties by transcending national confinements and adopting an international dimension. At Johns Hopkins University, he addressed the question



The concept of loyalty is distorted when it is understood to mean blind acceptance.

whether international service is possible without split loyalties in a divided world. The problem as posed here is to my mind unreal. We are true to this or that ideal, and this or that interest, because we have in openness and responsibility recognized it as an ideal and an interest true to us. We embrace ideals and interests in their own right, not because they are those of our environment or of this or that group. Our relations to our fellow men do not determine our attitude to ideals, but are determined by our ideals. If our attitude is consistent, we shall be consistent in our loyalties. If our attitude is confused, then our loyalties will also be divided. In the world of today there is an urge to conformism which sometimes makes people complain of a lack of loyalty in those who criticize the attitudes prevalent in their environment. May I ask: Who shows true loyalty to that environment, one who before his conscience has arrived at the conclusion that something is wrong and in all sincerity gives voice to his criticism, or the one who in self-protection closes his eyes to what is objectionable and shuts his lips on his criticism? The concept of loyalty is distorted when it is understood to mean blind acceptance.²⁸

He insisted that the problem of loyalties is ‘common to us in all walks of life’:

In fact, it is a national problem; and a problem within whatever group of friends and associates you may be working, just as much as it is an international problem. The essence of international service, and the problem of loyalty as it presents itself in the light of such service, is the essence of all service to fellow men, and it is the problem of loyalty as we face it everywhere.²⁹

27 ‘Introduction to the Sixteenth Annual Report’, *op. cit.*, p. 556.

28 ‘International Service’, Address at Johns Hopkins University Commencement Exercise, Baltimore, Maryland, 14 June 1955 (UN Press Release SG/424, 13 June 1955), in Andrew W. Cordier and Wilder Foote (eds), *Public Papers ... Volume II*, *op. cit.*, p. 504.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 505.

He ends this, the first of the three lectures, with a strikingly unbiased appeal to combine the universal values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations with the moral guiding principles of one's own convictions as the ultimate compass:

The attitude basic to international service places the pursuit of happiness under laws of conscience which alone can justify freedom [...] the final issue is what dignity we are willing to give to man. It is part of the American creed, part of the inherited ideology of all Western civilization, that each man is an end in himself, of infinite value as an individual. To pay lip-service to this view or to invoke it in favor of our actions is easy. But what is in fact the central tenet of this ideology becomes a reality only when we, ourselves, follow a way of life, individually and as members of a group, which entitles us personally to the freedom of a mature individual, living under the rules of his conscience. And it becomes the key to our dealings with others only when inspired by a faith which in truth and spirit gives to them the value which is theirs according to what we profess to be our creed.³⁰

Hammarskjöld's firm belief in the fundamental values and principles guiding human beings as their individual moral compasses, wherever they come from or live and on whichever assignments they work, also anchored his understanding and concept of service to the family of nations. He felt strongly that such service would have to respect and embrace the individual's undivided loyalty to his or her own faith and truth. This was for him an integral part of the framework to orient the fulfilment of duties as an international civil servant. In his famous Oxford speech on 'The International Civil Servant in Law and in Fact', which he delivered a few months before his death, he reiterated this conviction in no uncertain terms by dismissing the view that a civil service requires neutrality, in the sense of non-commitment to basic moral convictions:

It is obvious from what I have said that the international civil servant cannot be accused of lack of neutrality simply for taking a stand on a controversial issue when this is his duty and cannot be avoided. But there remains a serious intellectual and moral problem as we move within an area inside which personal judgment must come into play. Finally, we have to deal here with a question of integrity or with, if you please, a question of conscience [...] if integrity in the sense of respect for law and respect for truth were to drive [the international civil servant] into positions of conflict with this or that interest, then that conflict is a sign of his neutrality and not of his

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 506.

failure to observe neutrality – then it is in line, not in conflict with his duties as an international civil servant.³¹

He once again returns at the end of this paradigmatic lecture to the latent tension between national interests and international advocacy and commitment, when he warns that:



Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld on 1 October 1958. Photo: UN Photo

Recently, it has been said, this time in Western circles, that as the international Secretariat is going forward on the road of international thought and action, while Member states depart from it, a gap develops between them and they are growing into being mutually hostile elements; and this is said to increase the tension in the world which it was the purpose of the United Nations to diminish. From this view the conclusion has been drawn that we may have to switch from an international Secretariat, ruled by the principles described in this lecture, to an intergovernmental Secretariat, the members of which obviously would not be supposed to work in the direction of an internationalism considered unpalatable to their governments. Such a passive acceptance of a nationalism rendering it necessary to abandon present efforts in the direction of internationalism symbolized by the international civil service – somewhat surprisingly regarded as a cause of tension – might, if accepted by the Member nations, well prove to be the Munich of international cooperation as conceived after the First World War and further developed under the impression of the tragedy of the Second World War. To abandon or to compromise with principles on which such cooperation is built may be no less dangerous than to compromise with principles regarding the rights of a nation. In both cases the price to be paid may be peace.³²

In his last words to his staff, Hammarskjöld reiterated again one of his fundamental principles: ‘If the Secretariat is regarded as truly international, and its individual members as owing no allegiance to any national government, then the Secretariat may develop as an instrument for the preservation of peace and security of increasing significance and responsibilities.’³³

Ten days before his death, Hammarskjöld, concluded his remarks on the occasion of the UN’s staff day with the following words, which were

31 The International Civil Servant in Law and in Fact’, Lecture Delivered in Congregation at Oxford University, Oxford, England, 30 May 1961 (UN Press Release SG/1035), in Andrew W. Cordier and Wilder Foote (eds), *Public Papers ... Volume V, op. cit.*, pp. 488 and 489.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 489.

33 ‘Last Words to the Staff – from Remarks on Staff Day’, New York, 8 September 1961, in *ibid.*, p. 564.

indeed his final ones to his colleagues. They resonate with the personal tone and philosophy of his diary, which he had left beside his bed in his New York apartment and which was posthumously published as *Vägmärken (Markings)*:

It is false pride to register and to boast to the world about the importance of one's work, but it is false humility, and finally just as destructive, not to recognize – and recognize with gratitude – that one's work has a sense. Let us avoid the second fallacy as carefully as the first, and let us work in the conviction that our work *has* a meaning beyond the narrow individual one and *has* meant something for man.³⁴

For Hammarskjöld, the work of the UN was to build on the commonality of humankind, its conduct and experience. During a visit to India in early February 1956, he addressed the Indian Council of World Affairs. Prompted by a moving encounter during a local cultural event performed in his honour, his mainly extemporaneous speech explored the dimensions of human universalism. A commonality beyond Western – or, indeed, any culturally, religiously or geographically limited – ideology or conviction is what he spoke to:

It is no news to anybody, but we sense it in different degrees, that our world of today is more than ever before *one* world. The weakness of one is the weakness of all, and the strength of one – not the military strength, but the real strength, the economic and social strength, the happiness of people – is indirectly the strength of all. Through various developments which are familiar to all, world solidarity has, so to say, been forced upon us. This is no longer a choice of enlightened spirits; it is something which those whose temperament leads them in the direction of isolationism have also to accept [...] With respect to the United Nations as a symbol of faith, it may [...] be said that to every man it stands as a kind of 'yes' to the ability of man to form his own destiny, and form his own destiny so as to create a world where the dignity of man can come fully into its own.³⁵



Through various developments which are familiar to all, world solidarity has, so to say, been forced upon us. This is no longer a choice of enlightened spirits.

Dag Hammarskjöld's ethics, his concept of solidarity, his sense of fundamental universal values and human rights in combination with his respect for the multitude of identities within the human family, as well as his responsibility as the world's highest international civil servant to assume global leadership, set standards that have to this day lost none of their value and relevance.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 566 (original emphasis).

³⁵ Quoted in Andrew W. Cordier and Wilder Foote (eds), *Public Papers ... Volume II*, op. cit., pp. 660 and 661.