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Investigation into the conditions and circumstances resulting in the tragic death of Dag Hammarskjöld and of the members of the party accompanying him

Letter dated 9 September 2024 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to refer to General Assembly resolution [77/252](#) concerning the investigation into the conditions and circumstances resulting in the tragic death of Dag Hammarskjöld and of the members of the party accompanying him on flight SE-BDY on the night of 17 to 18 September 1961.

In accordance with paragraph 1 of resolution [77/252](#), in early 2023 I reappointed Mohamed Chande Othman as Eminent Person to continue to review the information received and possible new information made available by Member States, as well as by individuals and private entities, to assess its probative value and to draw conclusions from the investigations already conducted.

I recall that I had previously appointed Mr. Othman as Eminent Person for successive periods in 2020, 2018 and 2017, pursuant to General Assembly resolutions [74/248](#), [72/252](#) and [71/260](#) respectively, and that I reported to the Assembly on progress made in 2022 ([A/76/892](#)), 2019 ([A/73/973](#)) and 2017 ([A/71/1042](#)). I also recall that I had previously appointed Mr. Othman as Head of the Independent Panel of Experts, established in accordance with Assembly resolution [69/246](#), adopted in December 2014, by which the Assembly reopened the investigation after new information had been brought to its attention as a result of the groundbreaking work of the Hammarskjöld Commission.

I wish to express my profound gratitude to the Eminent Person for his exemplary and consequential work, as well as for his unwavering commitment in the pursuit of the full truth regarding the tragic event.

I am encouraged that in the years following the reopening of the investigation, pursuant to General Assembly resolution [69/246](#) in 2014, the body of relevant knowledge has grown with each of the successive mandates of the Eminent Person and with the work of the Independent Panel of Experts. I am also encouraged that the body of relevant knowledge has again increased under the present mandate of the Eminent Person. Significant new information has been provided to the Eminent Person, including in the areas of: (a) probable intercepts by Member States of relevant communications; (b) the capacity of the armed forces of Katanga, or others, to have



conducted a possible attack on flight SE-BDY; (c) the presence in the area of foreign paramilitary and intelligence personnel; and (d) further new information relevant to the context and surrounding events of 1961.

Following his assessment of the probative value of relevant information, I take note of the Eminent Person's assessment that, although historically there have been many theories put forward as a potential cause or causes of the crash, he considers many of these theories to be unsubstantiated. This is indeed a very positive development. At this juncture, the Eminent Person assesses that it remains plausible that an external attack or threat was a cause of the crash. In this regard, the Eminent Person notes that many eyewitnesses have stated that they observed more than one aircraft in the air, that the other aircraft may have been a jet, that SE-BDY was on fire before it crashed and/or that SE-BDY was fired upon or otherwise actively engaged by another aircraft. The Eminent Person notes that the alternative hypotheses that appear to remain available are that the crash resulted from sabotage, or unintentional human error.

I am encouraged by the disclosure of new information by some Member States. I am also encouraged that certain key Member States have indicated their high-level and continued commitment to engage with the Eminent Person. This includes the welcome proposal by one Member State for the Eminent Person to be in direct contact with relevant agencies and departments, with a view to facilitating more effective searches in the future. I welcome this proposal and encourage other Member States to follow what would appear to be a constructive approach.

At the same time, I note the Eminent Person's assessment that he considers that it is almost certain that specific, crucial and to date undisclosed information exists in the archives of Member States. I also note the Eminent Person's assessment that he has not received, to date, specific responses to his specific queries from certain Member States, and that the lack of full disclosure, to date, remains the primary obstacle to a path to concluding the inquiry. The Eminent Person also assesses that Member States should be able to clearly demonstrate that they have conducted a full review of records and archives to achieve full disclosure, especially in their security, intelligence and defence archives. I fully support the Eminent Person's efforts, and I have personally engaged with certain Member States to follow up on the Eminent Person's outstanding requests for information.

I wish to express my gratitude to independent high-ranking officials appointed by Member States (Independent Appointees), as well as individual researchers for their cooperation with the Eminent Person and their willingness to provide additional information. Their role has been crucial in advancing the body of relevant knowledge, noting the Eminent Person's assessment that, notwithstanding the disclosure of information by some Member States, almost all new information provided between 2020 and 2024 has originated from individual researchers and non-State entities.

The Eminent Person notes that: (a) opportunities remain for constructive engagement with Member States, including key Member States; (b) specific responses to the precise queries by the Eminent Person remain outstanding from key Member States, as do responses to the Eminent Person's discrete queries from other Member States; (c) it is almost certain that further relevant information exists, including radio or other communications; (d) Member States have yet to discharge their burden of proof to show that they have conducted a full review of their records and archives resulting in full disclosure; and (e) it would be neither judicious or responsible to reach a conclusion without the benefit of all potentially material information, in circumstances where such information has been shown to be almost certain to exist.

Accordingly, I support the Eminent Person's recommendation that an independent person be appointed to continue the work undertaken pursuant to the current mandate of the Eminent Person.

I also support the Eminent Person's recommendation that key Member States be urged to designate specific points of contact, whether independent appointees, or other specific points of contact in concerned departments and agencies, with all the necessary independence, access, clearances and resources to facilitate their assignments and expedite searches. Such points of contact would be appointed to work collaboratively on any outstanding queries, including to determine whether relevant information exists in Member States' security, intelligence and defence archives. In addition, I support the Eminent Person's recommendation that all Member States be called upon to provide relevant information and to ensure comprehensive access to all archives, more than 60 years after the crash, and agree with the Eminent Person's proposal that potential modes of disclosure and conditions of confidentiality be offered to Member States, without necessarily requiring that relevant information be disclosed in full or publicly.

I also support the Eminent Person's recommendation that all Member States be encouraged, as may be appropriate, to make assistance available to the independent person and those voluntarily assisting the independent person, should the work be continued. This would include making resources, including expertise, available to assist in the investigation and to encourage individuals and private entities to disclose any relevant records, and that Member States assist such individuals and entities to have the greatest practicable degree of access to information.

Moreover, I support the Eminent Person's recommendation that the United Nations continue to work towards making key documents of the Dag Hammarskjöld investigation publicly available through a dedicated online collection, including documents pertaining to the 1961 United Nations Commission investigation, the 2013 Hammarskjöld Commission, the 2015 United Nations Independent Panel of Experts and the 2017, 2019 and 2022 reports of the Eminent Person, as well as the Eminent Person's present report.

Finally, I wish to take the opportunity to highlight, for the General Assembly's consideration, another important area identified by the Eminent Person, notably the possibility of undertaking other investigative tasks, including research in relevant archival sources and the re-examination of the plane wreckage using modern technology, to assess whether there are any physical indications of sabotage. This would require specific resources or voluntary assistance.

I am encouraged by the progress that has been made since the reopening of the investigation in 2014. With significant progress having been made, let us renew our resolve and commitment to pursue the full truth of what happened on that fateful night in 1961. We owe this to Dag Hammarskjöld, to the members of the party accompanying him, and to their families. We owe this also to the United Nations. I consider this to be our solemn duty, and I will do everything I can do to support the investigation, including in my continued engagement with Member States.

I call on the General Assembly to remain seized of the matter, acknowledge the report of the Eminent Person and endorse his recommendations, as discussed above.

(Signed) António **Guterres**

Letter dated 16 August 2024 from the Eminent Person appointed pursuant to General Assembly resolution 77/252 addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to refer to General Assembly resolution 77/252 concerning the investigation into the conditions and circumstances resulting in the tragic death of former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld and of the members of the party accompanying him.

I was honoured to be reappointed as Eminent Person in March 2023. This role builds on similar positions that I have held in relation to the same subject matter, first as Chair of the Independent Panel of Experts in 2015, and then as Eminent Person in 2017, 2018–2019 and 2020–2022. With the present letter I submit a report on the work undertaken in accordance with the mandate described in paragraph 1 of resolution 77/252, including my key findings, conclusions and recommendations.

By its resolution 77/252, the General Assembly urged Member States to provide relevant information and encouraged them to assist the work of the Eminent Person. Under the present mandate, I have therefore continued to request Member States to ensure that a full review of their archives and records has been conducted and that all available records in their possession that may bear on this inquiry have been released.

At the outset, I note that the work of the Eminent Person involves seeking from Member States such disclosure as may be necessary to establish a firm evidentiary foundation from which any conclusions regarding the cause or causes of the crash may be reached. A primary aspect of the work is therefore to ensure that present searches and the disclosure process are as comprehensive as possible, so that if any conclusion can be reached, it is on the best available information. In this sense, the work is forward-looking and seeks to improve the current state of knowledge, rather than to critically appraise or censure previous inquiries or disclosure processes.

To implement the disclosure aspect of the mandate, throughout 2023 and 2024 I sent requests for information to the three key Member States that were identified in my report of 2022 and referred to in paragraph 2 of resolution 77/252: South Africa, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. During the period 2023–2024, I also sought information and assistance from additional Member States, including Ethiopia, Germany, Italy, the Republic of the Congo, Sweden and Zimbabwe. My correspondence with them and the new information I received is described in full in my report of 2024.

In respect of the three key Member States, I was grateful to receive responses to my correspondence in 2024 from South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States. I did not receive answers to my specific queries or the disclosure of any documentation from any of these Member States. However, representatives of each personally underscored to me a commitment to providing full cooperation. I have provided my most recent correspondence with each of these Member States as an annex to the present report.

Notably, in correspondence in May 2024, the Director-General of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa invited me to be in direct contact with the relevant agencies and departments within South Africa. This will allow the context, search parameters and requirements to be directly explained to the individuals who will conduct the searches. Although further concrete steps could not be taken by the time of the 2024 report, the suggestion from South Africa was a welcome proposal to facilitate more effective searches in the future. I also raised the possibility of such an approach with other relevant Member States and

it was met favourably or taken up as a matter for further consideration and decision. I discuss this further in the 2024 report.

In addition to Member States, I also engaged with individuals and voluntary researchers during the present mandate. From them, I received dozens of submissions and significant new information, the probative value of which is assessed in my report. I am very grateful to have received the noteworthy cooperation of these individuals, who continue to generate significant new information and momentum.

Private efforts also led to other significant developments during the present mandate period, including a conference and forum hosted at the University of London by the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, which is part of the School of Advanced Study in partnership with the United Nations Association Westminster. The conference was attended by some Member State and United Nations representatives, as well as academics, diplomats and authors. The forum connected separate strands of individual researchers' work and benefited from a round table chaired by the former High Commissioner of the United Kingdom to South Africa, Lord Paul Boateng, and a keynote address by the former Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Jan Eliasson. The convenors made all information and transcripts available to me and have also published them online. Such efforts generate interest and new information and are to be commended for the assistance they provide to this inquiry, in accordance with the wishes expressed in resolution [77/252](#) that individuals and private entities also be encouraged to make records available for review.

Based on work under the present mandate, the body of relevant knowledge has again increased in a number of areas, including the probable intercepts by Member States of relevant communications; the capacity of the armed forces of Katanga, or others, to have conducted an attack on flight SE-BDY; the presence in the area of foreign paramilitary and intelligence personnel; and further new information relevant to the context and surrounding events of 1961. Developing on the wishes expressed by the General Assembly in successive resolutions, I have liaised with the Archives and Records Management Section of the United Nations with a view to considering how this new information and the submissions from Member States and individuals may be made publicly accessible through a dedicated online collection.

As required by the terms of resolution [77/252](#), I have sought to draw conclusions from the investigations already conducted. As in prior years, I assess that it remains plausible that an external attack or threat was a cause of the crash. The alternative hypotheses that appear to remain available are that the crash resulted from sabotage or unintentional human error. Although historically there have been many other theories put forward to explain what may have occurred on the fateful night, as detailed in the current and prior reports, I consider such theories to be unsubstantiated.

Although certain additional findings about aspects of information and hypotheses relating to the crash may be made, resolving the ultimate cause or causes of the tragic event is not presently achievable because of the incomplete state of disclosure of information. Echoing findings made in my report in 2022, I consider that it would be neither judicious nor responsible to reach a conclusion without the benefit of all potentially material information, in circumstances where such information has been shown to be almost certain to exist. This material information appears to have been created or held by a few key Member States, but remains undisclosed. The lack of full disclosure remains the primary obstacle to a path to concluding this inquiry. Despite putting relevant Member States on notice that I consider that they hold the burden of proof to conduct a full review of records and archives to achieve full disclosure, specific questions that I have posed remain unanswered and reasons for non-disclosure have not been clearly articulated.

In balancing the need to continue to strive towards full disclosure, I acknowledge that certain records may remain sensitive, even 63 years later, and that Member States have a legitimate interest in ensuring that such information is appropriately handled. In this regard, while declassification is generally desirable, where it is not possible other modes of disclosure or methods to protect information sensitivity should be considered. In my engagements with key Member States, I have offered to work with them to identify ways to facilitate the identification of relevant information, without necessarily requiring that it be disclosed.

Without prejudice to your prerogatives as Secretary-General and the ultimate decision of the General Assembly, I make six mutually compatible and reinforcing recommendations in my report of 2024. These recommendations are: (a) that the United Nations appoint an independent person to continue the work undertaken pursuant to the current mandate of the Eminent Person; (b) that key Member States be urged to designate specific points of contact, whether independent appointees or other specific points of contact in the agencies or departments concerned, with all the necessary independence, access, clearances and resources to facilitate their assignments and expedite searches. Such points of contact would be appointed to work collaboratively on any outstanding queries, including to determine whether relevant information exists in the security, intelligence and defence archives of Member States; (c) that all Member States be called upon to provide relevant information and ensure comprehensive access to all archives, more than 60 years after the crash; (d) that all Member States be encouraged, as may be appropriate, to make assistance available to the independent person and those voluntarily assisting the independent person, including to permit such persons to have the greatest practicable degree of access to information, should the work be continued; (e) that at the end of the mandate, any independent person appointed be asked specifically to conclude whether Member States have complied with the process outlined by the Assembly, and whether it may be apposite at that stage to reach a formal determination regarding the implications of any non- or partial cooperation; and (f) that the United Nations continue to work towards making key documents of the Dag Hammarskjöld investigation publicly available through a dedicated online collection.

As in prior years, I extend profound gratitude for the invaluable cooperation received from representatives of Member States, staff of the United Nations and private individuals. The continued progress of this inquiry is largely sustained through the assistance of individuals who have given freely and generously of their time, expertise and information. These individuals are motivated by nothing more than the ideal of a complete and accurate account of the truth. The contributions of those mentioned in my report and others are respectfully commended to you.

I also wish to express my deepest respects to the families of those who tragically lost their lives on the night of 17 to 18 September 1961 in the service of the United Nations. Under this mandate I have again had the opportunity to directly and indirectly seek that representatives of the families be kept apprised of the ongoing work. Their unwavering dedication and patience through this process underscore that the prevailing decades have not diminished the significance of this matter to them, the United Nations, or the global community.

In closing, may I respectfully express my gratitude for you having personally restated your commitment to the pursuit for the full truth of the tragic event and for your engagement, including by writing to specific Member States to follow up on my outstanding requests for information in 2024. As you expressed at the wreath-laying ceremony commemorating the sixty-second anniversary of the crash of flight SE-BDY, the example set by the illustrious former Secretary-General of the United

Nations inspires us to keep striving to narrow the gap between the world as it is, and the world as we know it can be.

(*Signed*) Mohamed Chande **Othman**
Eminent Person

Executive summary

1. The present section contains an executive summary of the 2024 report of the Eminent Person appointed pursuant to General Assembly resolution [77/252](#) concerning the investigation into the conditions and circumstances resulting in the tragic death of former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld and of the members of the party accompanying him (Dag Hammarskjöld investigation).
2. The subsections of the executive summary introduce the subject matter (sect. A); describe the mandate of the Eminent Person with reference to General Assembly resolution [77/252](#) (sect. B); formulate provisional conclusions that may be reached in respect of relevant thematic areas based on a synthesis of new information analysed between 2015 and 2024 (sect. C); and describe the conclusions and recommendations presented in the 2024 report (sect. D).
3. The executive summary forms a part of the 2024 report and reflects the present state of cumulative knowledge regarding key matters, which has grown with each of the successive mandates of the Independent Panel of Experts and the Eminent Person. To avoid ambiguity with previous findings, where possible the executive summary replicates the text previously used, save where amendments are necessary in view of developments since an earlier version. Our knowledge of key matters of course remains subject to change based on future developments.

A. Introduction

4. On the night of 17 to 18 September 1961, a chartered DC-6 plane known as the *Albertina* and registered as flight SE-BDY, crashed just after midnight near Ndola, in what was then the British protectorate of Northern Rhodesia. It was carrying the second Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld, and 15 other dedicated women and men who served on a mission for peace in the Congo. Hammarskjöld, who would posthumously receive the Nobel Peace Prize, and 14 of the 15 members of the party accompanying him, died instantly. The sole survivor, Sergeant Harold Julien, succumbed to injuries sustained in the crash some days later.
5. In the 63 years since the crash, a series of inquiries have explored various hypotheses for the crash, including an aerial or ground attack or other external threat (external attack or threat), sabotage, hijacking and human error. Following two Rhodesian inquiries in 1961/62, a United Nations Commission of Investigation determined in 1962 that it was not able to find support for, or exclude any, of the various hypotheses that had been advanced to explain the crash. As a result, the General Assembly left the matter open in 1962, requesting the Secretary-General to inform it of any new evidence that might arise.
6. Some 50 years later, new evidence was brought to the General Assembly's attention by the Hammarskjöld Commission, a private and voluntary body of four renowned jurists. It concluded in 2013 that the United Nations would be justified in resuming an examination of the tragic event. As a result, in 2015 the Assembly tasked an Independent Panel of Experts to examine and assess the probative value of new information. The Independent Panel, of which I was Chair, effectively ruled out certain hypotheses regarding the cause of the crash but recommended the need for a further inquiry or investigation. Following this, I was appointed as Eminent Person in 2017 with a mandate to review potential new information, to assess its probative value and to determine the scope that any further inquiry or investigation should take. In further appointments in 2018, 2020 and 2023, my mandate has reflected that of 2017 but with additional authorization to draw conclusions from the investigations already conducted, if possible.

7. The Independent Panel and the Eminent Person have respectively prepared and submitted reports to the General Assembly in 2015 (Independent Panel report), 2017 (2017 report), 2019 (2019 report), 2022 (2022 report) and 2024 (2024 report).

B. Present mandate and 2024 report

8. Despite the General Assembly having authorized the Eminent Person under previous mandates to draw conclusions from the investigations already conducted, in my 2022 report I found that reaching such conclusions was not possible. In the 2022 report, I affirmed that the non-disclosure by Member States of important information was the main obstacle to reaching a conclusion regarding the cause of the crash. I concluded that the burden of proof to conduct a full review of records and archives resulting in full disclosure had not been discharged. In particular, I held in the 2022 report that three “key Member States”, South Africa, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, were almost certain to hold important undisclosed information. Each of these Member States has since renewed its commitment at a high level to full disclosure.

9. An increasingly strong majority of Member States of the United Nations has urged concrete action to support the collective pursuit of the full truth concerning the tragic incident. This was reflected in resolution [77/252](#), through which the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to reappoint the Eminent Person. Among other matters, in its resolution [77/252](#) the Assembly welcomed the 2022 report and called upon the Member States referred to therein to cooperate with and assist the Eminent Person fully.

10. In accordance with the General Assembly’s urging that Member States release any relevant records in their possession, as specified in successive resolutions [69/246](#), [71/260](#), [72/252](#), [74/248](#) and [77/252](#), in 2023 I initially sent requests for information to the following Member States: Germany, South Africa, the United Kingdom, the United States and Zimbabwe. I also corresponded with and sought assistance from additional Member States, including Ethiopia, Italy, the Republic of the Congo and Sweden. Some of my requests for assistance were answered. Some remain outstanding. Details regarding interactions with all Member States that were engaged with between 2023 and 2024 are discussed in full below in the 2024 report.

11. The outcome of my interactions between 2023 and 2024 with the three key Member States identified in the 2022 report as requiring further engagement and referred to in General Assembly resolution [77/252](#) included the following:

(a) In respect of South Africa, I was grateful to receive a response to my request for information in May 2024 from the Director General, Department of International Relations and Cooperation. I did not, however, receive any new information or specific responses to the matters I identified, either during the 2018/19 period, between 2020 and 2022, or between 2023 and 2024. In the May 2024 correspondence, however, South Africa proposed that various departments could be contacted directly to request assistance. I also received full assurances from the representatives of South Africa of its support for the key aims of the investigation, which include to comprehensively examine intelligence, security and defence archives. As discussed in the 2024 report, I believe that South Africa has made a constructive proposal that may better permit the context, search parameters and requirements to be directly explained to the designated individuals who will conduct any future searches;

(b) In respect of the United Kingdom, I was grateful to receive a response in April 2024 to my request for information from the Head of the United Nations and Multilateral Department, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. My

specific requests for information and confirmation of search parameters were not answered. The response stated relevantly that the position of the United Kingdom “remains that all information of value to the Inquiry has already been provided to the Inquiry itself or has been released to The National Archives at Kew and is available to the public there”. In subsequent meetings with representatives of the United Kingdom, I received confirmation of the full support of the United Kingdom to the investigation. I did not receive any new information from the United Kingdom by way of documentation or other records, either during the 2018/19 period, between 2020 and 2022, or between 2023 and 2024;

(c) In respect of the United States, I was grateful to receive a response in March 2024 to my request for information from the Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Organizations Affairs of the United States Department of State, which stated that the United States was “not aware of any additional information pertaining to the specific questions in your request, but [would] reconfirm with relevant agencies”. In subsequent meetings with representatives of the United States, I received confirmation of the full support of the United States to the investigation and was informed that searches, including in intelligence, security and defence archives, remained ongoing. My specific requests for information and confirmation of search parameters were not answered. Other than as noted in the 2022 report, I did not receive any new information by way of documentation or other records between 2020 and 2022, or between 2023 and 2024.

12. In 2023 and 2024, the Secretary-General offered his assistance to me by way of writing to specific Member States to follow up on my outstanding requests for information. In this regard, in January 2024 the Secretary-General wrote directly to Ethiopia, the Republic of the Congo, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States, enclosing a copy of my correspondence to those Member States of January 2024. I was grateful for this important assistance from the Secretary-General and for his expression of personal commitment to the mandate.

13. Respectfully, for reasons discussed in the 2024 report, I consider that it may be possible to identify further relevant records, archives and/or other information that are or were created or held by each of South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States. There are opportunities for constructive engagement through seeking a higher level of detail in responses to specific queries, rather than broad statements, which would better permit the narrowing of search queries.

14. Notwithstanding the identification and disclosure by some Member States of new information, almost all new information generated between 2020 and 2024 came from individual researchers and non-State entities. This shows a change from how new information was obtained under previous mandates. Noting this change and recalling the terms of General Assembly resolution [77/252](#) that individuals and private entities should be encouraged to make records available for review, under the present and prior mandate I had significant interactions with individual researchers. This included direct interactions as well as an informal forum to encourage individuals to disseminate the results of their research work among each other, to better facilitate the sharing of knowledge.

15. The dozens of submissions that I received from individuals in 2023 and 2024 generated relevant new information in areas including radio communications and intercepts, the possible involvement of specific mercenary pilots or other agents and the presence and role of foreign intelligence agencies and operatives. The work of these individual researchers has again enabled important probative assessments to be made. Their valued contributions continue to be of great service and assistance in the search for the truth. Individuals who aided in my work are identified in the 2024 report. In particular, I acknowledge the collaborative efforts and new information

received from Fitschen, Fröhlich, Hood, Karlsson, Picard, Simensen, Wardrop and Williams. Other individuals provided important new information but seek to remain anonymous.

16. During the period of the present mandate there were also private efforts related to the aims of the investigation that aided in the search for the truth. This included a conference and forum hosted at the University of London Institute of Commonwealth Studies, School of Advanced Study, in partnership with the United Nations Association Westminster. This conference was attended by some Member State and United Nations representatives, as well as academics, diplomats and authors. The forum connected separate strands of individual researchers' work and benefited from a round table chaired by the former High Commissioner of the United Kingdom to South Africa, Lord Boateng, and a keynote address by the former Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ambassador Jan Eliasson. The convenors made all information and transcripts available to me and have also published them online. Such efforts generate interest and new information and are to be commended for the assistance they provide to this inquiry.

17. Despite the decrease in the amount of information identified by Member States, the amount and quality of new information provided by individuals and non-State entities has again had the effect of highlighting that additional information is almost certain to exist in the records and archives of key Member States. Such information has been identified in specific and finite terms to those Member States and is referred to in the 2024 report.

18. A topic of primary relevance remains records of radio traffic or other relevant communications on the night of the crash. It appears almost certain that more communications occurred than were officially acknowledged or disclosed. As described further below, the historical record indicates that personnel or agents of the United Kingdom and the United States are most likely to have created, held or been aware of records of such radio traffic. This assertion is founded on the presence and involvement of their respective personnel and assets in and around the Congo and Northern Rhodesia on 17 to 18 September 1961, as described in the 2024 report.

19. On this topic, in July 2022 the United Kingdom advised me that it did not "hold any" archived records of radio traffic; similarly, the United States referred me to its 2021 "searches [that had] turned up no such records". I did not form the view that the response of either Member State was a conclusive or complete answer to my queries. Accordingly, in July 2023 and January 2024 I again wrote to the United Kingdom and the United States. The January 2024 correspondence to each requested confirmation regarding:

(a) A full list of records that exist or existed that were created or held by [British and American] intelligence agencies that refer to communications to, from or concerning the Secretary-General's plane or its crash;

(b) Whether searches have also been conducted of the records and archives of all security and defence agencies and, if so, a list of their records that refer to communications to, from or concerning the Secretary-General's plane or its crash.

20. I did not receive responses to those specific queries by the time of the completion of the 2024 report.

21. If flight SE-BDY was attacked or menaced, it is likely that radio communications may have been used by the attackers and/or that SE-BDY may have made or attempted to make communications, in addition to those already known. Numerous individuals have referred to overhearing such communications and further suspicion is raised by the destruction of some of the Ndola air traffic control tower's records of that night. These circumstances make it particularly important to establish

conclusively whether records of such communications ever existed. An unambiguous and definitive response to the queries put to the United Kingdom and the United States remains necessary to assess the remaining hypotheses, including whether external interference may have been a cause of the crash.

C. Matters taken to be established

22. As already discussed, between 2023 and 2024 important new information was generated from research in both private and public archives, enabling probative assessments to be made. Further advancements have been made in the body of relevant knowledge, most notably regarding areas including the probable intercepts by Member States of relevant communications; the capacity of the armed forces of Katanga, or others, to have conducted an attack on flight SE-BDY; the presence in the area of foreign paramilitary and intelligence personnel; and further new information relevant to the context and surrounding events of 1961.

23. In recent years our state of knowledge has grown, with which searches for further information have become more focused. In this regard, many theories and allegations that had persisted since 1961 have methodically been reduced, with unsubstantiated claims discarded.

24. A consolidated summary of matters that appear to have been established is provided below, based on information reviewed up to and including in the 2024 report. The summary builds on that contained in the 2022 report.

25. For clarity, I note that I have provided key Member States with the opportunity to respond to findings that have previously been made that concern their entities or personnel. No Member State other than Germany sought to clarify the findings of the 2022 report in any way, including in respect of the presence and acts of its intelligence personnel and agencies. Accordingly, where a finding was made in the 2022 report regarding an act attributable to the personnel, agency or other entity of a Member State and that Member State did not seek to clarify the finding, I have taken the conclusion to be strengthened.

26. The following summary is not intended to canvass all relevant information, but to recite areas where important conclusions may be reached and to indicate where lines of inquiry suggest further work remains necessary. Detailed references to sources are not provided in the summary. For such references, the 2017, 2019, 2022 and 2024 reports should be consulted in full.

1. Background

27. The 1961/62 inquiries (early inquiries) made substantial contributions to the historical record. However, they had significant shortcomings. In particular, a promising opportunity was lost when the evidence of local “African” witnesses was not given due regard. Each continuing stage of this work has found evidence that was obscured from or otherwise not considered by the early inquiries.

28. Consideration of the possible causes of the crash was incomplete during the early inquiries. In particular, the hypothesis that an external attack or threat may have been carried out against flight SE-BDY was dismissed too readily, in part because the context of events in September 1961 had not been adequately taken into account. This context included that there was active armed conflict involving various parties, including the United Nations. The area to which flight SE-BDY was headed was therefore in a heightened militarized state, with military operations in place on both sides of the Congolese/Northern Rhodesian border, and significant forces were

assembled in a combat-ready state along the flight path and in the vicinity of where the plane crashed.

29. The 1961/62 inquiries were also affected by partiality. British and Northern Rhodesian officials attempted to influence the findings of those inquiries to conclude that the crash was the result of pilot error, rather than any type of external interference. Rhodesian officials also appear to have sought to limit access to the sole temporary survivor of the crash, Sergeant Julien, while he was alive and being treated in hospital in Ndola, in part because of concerns that he might speak about an explosion on board the plane or sparks in the sky before the crash.

2. Findings regarding the cause of the crash

30. There remain a limited number of hypotheses for what occurred in the final tragic moments of flight SE-BDY. It is my view that additional efforts may permit a further narrowing of the potential explanations, by the ruling out of one or more of the remaining hypotheses.

31. From the totality of the information at hand, it appears plausible that an external attack or threat may have been a cause of the crash, whether by way of a direct attack causing SE-BDY to crash or by distracting the pilots at the critical stage of preparing to land. While it would have been difficult to conduct an attack on SE-BDY in the prevailing circumstances, the conditions and available resources were such that an attack could have been mounted in one of several ways.

32. There was widespread advance knowledge of the fact that Hammarskjöld would travel by plane to Ndola that night. This included both locally in the Congo and Northern Rhodesia, as well as in other countries, including the United Kingdom and the United States. The information came from United Nations officials, who were communicating with representatives of the United Kingdom about the travel arrangements on 17 September 1961 immediately before the fatal voyage commenced. The message was likely relayed through radio equipment installed by the Belgian Engineer Manfred Loeb and monitored by British intelligence (MI6) operative Neil Ritchie. It is possible that other sources, including Belgian and Congolese officials, and mercenaries of various provenance, also became aware of this information in advance. The destination and timing of flight SE-BDY therefore were not secret and the plane could have been exposed to the possibility of ill-intended or hostile action while en route to Ndola, despite the attempts of the pilots to maintain a low profile.

33. Many eyewitnesses have stated that they observed more than one aircraft in the air, that the other aircraft may have been a jet, that SE-BDY was on fire before it crashed and/or that SE-BDY was fired upon or otherwise actively engaged by another aircraft. Seven witnesses informed the Rhodesian inquiries that they saw a second or third aircraft. The 1961 United Nations Commission heard at least six witnesses who spoke of noticing more than one plane and at least 12 witnesses who spoke of a flash, or similar light, in the sky. Since the early inquiries, an additional 12 eyewitnesses have come forward with similar accounts, further corroborating the possibility of an external attack.

34. There is no evidence that mechanical or other material failure affected flight SE-BDY, including failure of engines, altimeters or gas spillage. Based on present information, hypotheses relating to mechanical, structural or material failure appear to be excluded.

35. There is no evidence that the pilots used the wrong altimeter setting (QNH) or incorrect landing charts. Independent expert opinion received in 2024 indicated that the captain was almost certainly using the correct Jeppesen landing chart. Based on

present information, hypotheses relating to the incorrect use by the pilots of altimeter settings or landing charts appear to be excluded.

36. Information analysed in recent years has uncovered correspondence referring to plans to sabotage flight SEBDY. This includes purported plots by the Organisation Armée Secrète (OAS) and the South African Institute of Maritime Research (SAIMR). The involvement of OAS is also said to have been referred to in plots to sabotage planes of other individuals carrying out what it claimed were “anti-French” activities in the early 1960s, including Enrico Mattei. Mattei is quoted as informing Italian authorities that he and Hammarskjöld had both been threatened by OAS, before Mattei was killed in a plane crash in 1962. It has not been possible to conclude whether sabotage may have been a cause of the crash of SE-BDY, due in part to difficulties with obtaining access to relevant documentation.

37. It may be possible to undertake investigative tasks relating to a re-examination of the plane wreckage using modern technology to assess whether there are any physical indications of sabotage. However, this would likely require the availability of specific resources or voluntary assistance and the results would not necessarily be conclusive.

38. Based on the medical evidence, it is reasonable to conclude that the passengers of flight SE-BDY died from injuries sustained during the plane crash. Accordingly, other claims regarding the cause of death, including that Hammarskjöld was assassinated either before the crash or after surviving it, may be dismissed.

39. The crash had one temporary survivor. Sergeant Harold Julien died in hospital some days after the crash from complications from acute renal failure. He might have survived had he received medical treatment more immediately after the crash. As noted by the United States Resident Consul in Lusaka in September 1961, this adds significance to the delays in search and rescue action on the part of Rhodesian authorities.

40. Furthermore, statements made by Julien, the only first-hand witness of the incident, or those who treated him before he passed away, were prematurely dismissed by the Rhodesian inquiries. Some statements that he may have made before passing away, including to his wife, were not put before those inquiries. Others were dismissed with undue haste. Properly characterizing and assessing his testimony should have been a matter of the highest priority. This is particularly relevant in view of the fact that his account, which indicated a fire or explosions on board the aircraft before its crash, corroborated the evidence given by various eyewitnesses. In sum, the lack of adequate consideration of the statements of the only passenger of flight SE-BDY who could speak of the crash was a significant material failure to consider potentially relevant evidence.

41. Also based on medical evidence, including initial toxicological findings and independent expert opinions sought in 2017, there is no evidence that any of the pilots or crew were affected by drugs or alcohol. Captain Hallonquist appeared to have had adequate opportunity for rest before flight SE-BDY. However, the other three members of the flight crew did not. Thus, fatigue may have affected the ability of the co-pilot and the flight engineer of SE-BDY, including their capacity to respond in the event of any unexpected circumstance.

42. Expert opinion has considered whether SE-BDY might have been attempting to make a voluntary attempted forced landing at the time of its crash. The independent expert opinion obtained in 2024 tends against such a finding.

43. It cannot be excluded at present that the crash may have resulted from human (pilot) error. Before such a conclusion may be reached, it must be certain that all potentially relevant evidence has been reviewed. It would be logically unsound to

make a finding that no external attack or threat was involved in circumstances where it is clear that not all relevant evidence has been disclosed. It would therefore be neither judicious nor responsible to reach any such conclusion without the benefit of all potentially material information, in circumstances where such information has been shown to be almost certain to exist.

3. Interception of communications

44. Communications were being monitored and intercepted in and around the Congo in September 1961 by various Member States. The United Kingdom, the United States and Northern Rhodesia (a British protectorate) intercepted and received interceptions of confidential United Nations communications throughout 1961, without the knowledge or consent of the United Nations. This included obtaining and sharing intercepted encoded wireless and signals communications, such as those relating to sensitive military matters.

45. Certain Member States' signals and intelligence agencies appear to have had the capacity to intercept and read encrypted communications sent to or by Hammarskjöld. Specifically, the United States and West Germany, and potentially other Member States, appear to have had covert and direct "backdoor" access that allowed them to intercept and decrypt messages transmitted from Hammarskjöld's CX-52 cryptographic machine, as well as potentially the high-level communications of other United Nations officials, or similar communications transmitted within or among other Member States.

46. The claim that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and/or National Security Agency (NSA) covertly monitored United Nations communications as part of an operation known in CIA first by the code name "Thesaurus" and later by the code name "Rubicon", has not been refuted by the Member States concerned. A sole clarification was received from Germany in 2024. This was to the effect that German archives did not reveal any indications that West German intelligence agencies had access to Hammarskjöld's communications before the crash, including direct advance access to information concerning the fateful voyage to Ndola.

47. At least one Member State, the United States, had sophisticated communications assets at and near Ndola airport on the night of the crash. This included mobile military assets such as several model C-47/DC-3 "Dakota" aircraft, which had sophisticated equipment that allowed them to intercept, transmit and receive communications over long distances, including intercontinentally, via listening stations in the region and beyond.

48. As analysed in the 2024 report, a specific reason for the presence of the Dakota aircraft and their personnel was so that communications could be assured. The aircraft with such facilities included two planes that had arrived in Ndola by 16 September 1961, one under the command of Commander Don Ely, United States naval attaché for air in Pretoria, and one under the command of Colonel Don Gaylor, United States air force attaché for air in Pretoria. A third Dakota was flown to Ndola from Elisabethville by Colonel Benjamin Matlick, United States air attaché in Leopoldville, on the morning of 18 September 1961. There is a reasonable evidentiary basis to consider that these or other aircraft in the region in September 1961 may have overheard or relayed communications from or about flight SE-BDY or communicated with it during its final flight.

49. At least one of the United States personnel present at Ndola on the night of the crash, Colonel Gaylor, has made specific reference to his "unique intelligence operations" and to creating and sending reports to the Pentagon, for which he said he received accolades. Gaylor was in the Ndola air traffic control tower on the night of the plane crash and the following day he was, according to his accounts, among the

first to locate the wreckage and share its coordinates with the Rhodesian authorities. No reports, including of his activities on 18 September 1961, have been disclosed, despite requests.

50. In addition to specific monitoring activities at Ndola airport, United States agencies including CIA and NSA had worldwide monitoring activities around 1961. It is highly likely that all local and regional Ndola radio traffic on the night of 17 to 18 September 1961 was tracked and recorded by NSA, and possibly also by CIA. In this regard, two United States personnel (Southall and Abram) have independently provided information tending to confirm that they were working for or in support of NSA activities on the night of 17 to 18 September 1961, when they personally overheard a transmission or recording, or read a transcription thereof, concerning an attack on flight SE-BDY. As of 2018, both men had passed away. Adequate opportunity and information have been provided since 2017 to clarify, modify or controvert the claims made by Abram and Southall. The fact that this opportunity has not been taken up tends to have the effect of supporting those claims.

51. Southall and Abram's accounts, backed by their confirmed positions and duties in communications and signals intelligence gathering, highlight that relevant communications about the crash are likely to exist. It remains necessary that the United States confirm details of the incident alleged, including whether records exist or ever existed of it, whether inquiries have been made of Southall and Abram's colleagues (including those identified in the 2024 report) and whether exhaustive searches of records of related agencies have also been made. It is also necessary to confirm the outcome of and full details of any internal United States investigations made since the 1960s into the claims of Southall or Abram, and regarding the crash more generally.

52. In 1961, British officials assisted foreign entities with re-establishing and managing communications, including between Northern Rhodesia and Katanga, after those communications were cut off. Specifically, Neil Ritchie (British Secret Intelligence Service (MI6)) flew engineer Manfred Loeb (Union Minière du Haut Katanga) to Kitwe, Northern Rhodesia, in September 1961. Loeb worked there with Gordon Hunt (Anglo American Mining and Rhodesian Border Power Co, who referred to himself as British intelligence), to support the transmission of messages between various parties. Ritchie, Hunt and Loeb were closely involved in coordinating relationships among the Governments of Katanga, Northern Rhodesia and the United Kingdom, and commercial entities, including through Union Minière offices in Katanga and Brussels.

4. Armed forces in and near the site of the crash in September 1961

53. The air force of Katanga (Avikat) was effective in combat operations against Congolese forces and civilians, and against United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC) forces. Aircraft supplied to Katanga and utilized in 1961 by Avikat included Douglas DC-3, Dornier DO-28, De Havilland Dove, Fouga Magister and various Piper models. The balance of evidence suggests that aircraft under the control of Avikat with offensive capability that were operable in September 1961 included one Fouga Magister, one Dornier DO-28 and a number of De Havilland Doves. Avikat had modified these aircraft for aerial attacks and bombings against ONUC and Congolese ground and air targets. Evidence reviewed suggests that, contrary to statements made to the early inquiries, the Fouga was capable of air-to-air attack and usage at night and that it had attacked foreign aircraft in Katanga. The Dornier DO-28 was also apparently modified for aerial attacks and bombings. It ultimately carried out both day and night bombing operations against the United Nations and appears to have attempted at least one air-to-air attack. Armaments for Avikat operations appear

to have included purchased armaments and armaments locally made with the involvement of Union Minière.

54. More airfields were available in and around Ndola than had been originally considered by the early inquiries and Avikat forces used airfields in both Katanga and Northern Rhodesia. Additional airfields from which Ndola may have been accessible were shown in a map that was provided in an annex to the 2017 report. The Northern Rhodesian military was aware that Avikat utilized its airfields. Avikat also utilized established and improvised airfields across Congolese and international territory in 1961, in locations including Katanga, Northern Rhodesia, Angola and the Republic of the Congo (Congo Brazzaville).

55. The early enquiries did not comprehend the extent to which foreign mercenaries, including pilots, were a significant force in and around Katanga in September 1961. Various personnel and mercenaries in the service of Katanga were in either Katanga or Ndola around the time of the plane crash and officials were keen to obscure their identities. New information analysed in 2024 supports this finding. A definitive list of persons present in Katanga or otherwise near to Ndola on 17 to 18 September 1961 is not available. However, advancements have been made in terms of the list of persons of interest who were in the Ndola at the relevant time and who were actively engaged in combat against the United Nations.

56. It has not been conclusively established which non-Katangan aircraft, personnel and equipment were operational in or near Ndola on 17 to 18 September 1961. In addition to Avikat aircraft, other aircraft stationed in or near Ndola included the Royal Rhodesian Air Force's 18 Canberra jet fighter-bombers, 30 Vampire jet fighter-bombers, 12 light attack Provosts and United States Dakotas.

57. Significant Rhodesian terrestrial forces were stationed near the border. In addition to regular and mercenary forces in Katanga, Katangan mercenaries sought to establish commando and other operations within Northern Rhodesia. Rhodesian authorities were involved in military traffic between Northern Rhodesia and Katanga and may have been involved in the creation of a guerrilla training area for Katangan forces in Northern Rhodesia.

58. In this regard, there was a degree of cooperation and mutual use of the border region by both Katanga and Northern Rhodesian military. According to new information analysed in 2024, at least one foreign government (West Germany) was aware in September 1961 that Northern Rhodesia was unofficially providing military support to Katanga and "Rhodesian pilots [were] flying Katangese jet fighters". Other German records refer to the Fouga being flown in 1961 by a South African pilot. Whether this may have been a reference to Jerry Puren or not is unclear; notably, new information analysed in the 2024 report appears to confirm that United States authorities were aware that Puren was in Ndola in the days after the crash of SE-BDY and sought to return to Katanga.

59. OAS was active in 1961 and appears to have had links to Katanga, including through the presence of Faulques, Trinquier and other OAS-linked mercenaries. Information analysed indicates that OAS-linked mercenaries had threatened United Nations officials in September 1961, including by circulating a "liquidation" list of ONUC officials, including Conor Cruise O'Brien, Michel Tombelaine, Björn Egge and others, and had given officials ultimatums to leave Katanga.

60. Contrary to the evidence of Major Joseph Delin of Avikat, who testified to the early inquiries that there was only one Katangan pilot who could have flown a plane in an attack against SE-BDY, Avikat had multiple serving pilots. Katangan authorities attempted to prevent these pilots from being identified.

61. As analysed in the 2024 report, although pilot flight log books may be of evidentiary value, they are not incontrovertible proof of what they assert. Reasons for this include that they are not necessarily created contemporaneously or intended to be comprehensive records. Notably, such logs may be created after the fact by persons other than the pilots.

62. The Belgian mercenary Avikat pilot Jan Van Risseghem is said to have claimed to have been involved in an attack on SE-BDY. Records indicate that he may have been a pilot in earlier Katangan attacks against the United Nations. It is not clear whether Van Risseghem had returned to Katanga by 17 September 1961. According to his own flight logs, between the months of July to September 1961, Van Risseghem flew the following types of aircraft for Avikat with various named co-pilots: Douglas DC-3, Dornier DO-28, De Havilland Dove, Fouga Magister and Piper.

63. A pilot of interest considered in the 2024 and earlier reports is Heinrich Schäfer. He was a German pilot who flew a Dornier DO-28 aircraft to Congo Brazzaville that ultimately arrived in Katanga and which was used in operations including against United Nations forces (it should be observed that no record exists of any such attacks by Schäfer). Schäfer's logs indicate that he was present in Greenland on 21 September 1961, which, if accurate, would make it unlikely that he could have been in Ndola on 18 September 1961, given the great distance between those locations.

64. Numerous sources refer to unidentified persons visiting the crash site before it was officially discovered, suggesting either involvement in a ground attack or an attempt to cover up or delay the discovery of the crash.

5. Foreign intelligence

65. There was a significant foreign intelligence presence in the region in 1961 that was not mentioned at all by the early inquiries. Former intelligence agents have made public statements about their activities in the region at the time. However, records created by foreign intelligence operatives have not been disclosed by Member States, despite requests. The official records that have come to light are only those that have resulted from independent research.

66. British intelligence and diplomatic officials played a key role in coordinating the proposed meeting between Hammarskjöld and the leader of the secessionist province of Katanga, Moïse Tshombe, in Ndola, to which Hammarskjöld and his party were travelling when SE-BDY crashed. MI6 agent Neil Ritchie worked with the British consul in Katanga, Denzil Dunnett, and the British High Commissioner in Salisbury, Lord Alport, among others, to make arrangements both in advance of the meeting and after the plane crash. Immediately prior to the crash Ritchie was corresponding directly with, among others, Tshombe, Welensky and Lord Alport. Ritchie shared information with Tshombe regarding United Nations military activities and requested the British Government to take steps not to permit the United Nations to obtain access to Ethiopian jets to use against Katangan forces. On the night of the plane crash, Ritchie, Hunt and Loeb stayed at the same location and after the crash Loeb and Ritchie travelled to Katanga with the aim of taking possession of Hammarskjöld's documents, which had been recovered from the crash site, to British Consul Dunnett. Despite Ritchie writing a secret report that was transmitted to the Commonwealth Relations Office in London after the plane crash (the Ritchie Report), no records of personnel of MI5 or MI6 have been disclosed by the United Kingdom.

67. In 1961, CIA had a significant presence in the Congo. Its stations in Leopoldville and Elisabethville had operations that included air operations (including, for example, Chief of Station Larry Devlin's coordination of agents "WIROGUE" and "QJWIN") and activities that included planned assassinations such as under the programme "ZRRIFLE", and other programmes. In the 1960s, though

likely some years after the crash of SE-BDY, CIA employed the mercenary Mike Hoare, who had been engaged in the service of Katanga in 1961 and who stated that the crash of SE-BDY was not an accident. Similarly, Senator Frank Church, who played a leading role in the United States Senate Select Committee (the Church Committee) and related investigations into intelligence operations involving entities including CIA and NSA, is said to have claimed that the United States has significant undisclosed information relating to the crash of SE-BDY.

68. As of 1960, West Germany decided to establish relations with newly independent States, including through setting up a local Federal Intelligence Service (Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND)) presence in them. However, it was not conclusively determined whether a BND presence had been established in Leopoldville or Katanga by 1961. Relatedly, although West Germany provided assistance in Katanga towards establishing a telecommunications network (of which ONUC was aware), it is not clear that this occurred before 1964. It is also not clear whether this included support for establishing a Congolese radio monitoring service for intelligence purposes.

69. West German, CIA and other records suggest the presence of West German operations in the Congo including (variously) related to BND agents or employees Colonel Stahl (Wolf Meister), Max Gärtner (Hans Germani), Bocholt (Kurt Büttner) and Whisell van Deventer (Robert Whisel Wybrands-Marcussen). Meister was to deliver a DO-28 to Katanga as a gift in mid-1961, although it appears that this did not ultimately occur until after the crash of SE-BDY.

70. Northern Rhodesian intelligence officials were implicated in military traffic and communications between Northern Rhodesia and Katanga, including via liaison with Avikat pilots. No Northern Rhodesian intelligence records have been disclosed. As identified by the current Governments of what were former British colonial territories, sensitive records were created within the Rhodesian Federation but, in the case of Northern Rhodesia, were taken into custody by the United Kingdom. The Independent Appointee of Zimbabwe has noted that colonial authorities “meticulously removed almost every record or archive associated with the Dag Hammarskjöld Crash”. Certain records, including of police, intelligence, military and immigration, are likely of central importance.

6. Other

71. The record of the final communications of SE-BDY as kept by air traffic control at Ndola airport was incomplete and possibly lacking in significant communications. Air Traffic Controller Arundel Campbell Martin admitted to having destroyed his original notes, despite stating that he knew the aircraft and its passengers to be of exceptional importance and notwithstanding that he stated that he was aware that no tapes were made of the interactions by Ndola air traffic control. Notably, Martin gave inconsistent accounts about his recollections to the early enquiries. Other sources have stated that tapes may have been made, but not disclosed.

72. Regarding the sabotage hypothesis, the paramilitary organization SAIMR appears to have existed in South Africa in the 1980s to 1990s. As relevant information in the archives of South Africa has not been made available, it is not possible to confirm whether SAIMR existed in 1961, or whether it may have been involved in a so-called Operation Celeste, the objective of which was said to be to “remove” Hammarskjöld.

73. The official account of Rhodesian authorities was that the wreckage of SE-BDY was found at around 1500 hours on 18 September 1961, some 15 hours after it failed to land. However, information from multiple sources has established that the wreckage was discovered earlier than this. Earlier reports analysed information from

British officials on this subject. In 2024, accounts from United States officials Matlick and Gaylor indicating the wreckage was discovered before 1500 hours were also considered. Gaylor stated that he searched for, located and communicated the location of the wreckage on the morning of 18 September 1961, thereafter staying in the air for hours until Rhodesian search aircraft arrived. Regardless of the precise time the wreckage was discovered, there does not appear to be a reasonable explanation for the delays in search and rescue action on the part of Rhodesian authorities.

D. Conclusions and recommendations

74. The 2022 report found it to be almost certain that relevant material exists regarding the ultimate question of what caused the plane to crash and that such material has not been disclosed by a small number of key Member States. This finding has been strengthened by new information analysed in the 2024 report. Seen in the light of the historical record, the available information shows that some Member States are almost certain to have created, held or been aware of information that is relevant to this investigation but has not been disclosed, including that obtained or generated by sources such as intelligence personnel and assets.

75. The approach outlined by the General Assembly in resolution [77/252](#) was complied with in part. A number of Member States meaningfully engaged with the process directed by the Assembly and provided support and information, as requested. Other Member States provided some responses or information but are believed to continue to hold important undisclosed information. Other than from Germany, no documentation of probative value was disclosed by key Member States between 2023 and 2024 and definitive responses to the queries I have raised with individual Member States have not been received.

76. Generally, although Member States may consider that they have previously complied with previous search requests, it is important for full disclosure that searches be conducted again in view of the significant advancements in knowledge and that the searches be conducted by personnel with adequate contextual knowledge.

77. I respectfully consider that the burden of proof assigned to key Member States remains to be discharged. As previously observed, the non-cooperation of Member States may be seen to be approaching intentional obstruction of the full truth of the circumstances and events. Given the nature, purposes and ongoing development of the investigation, the specific matters flagged for further enquiry in the 2024 report and the efforts that continue to be pursued, it would still not be apposite at the present stage to reach a formal conclusion regarding the consequences or implications of any non- or partial cooperation. However, such a situation gathers significance over time.

78. Several matters are flagged for follow up in the 2024 report. These include, non-exhaustively, definitive answers from Member States regarding records of radio communications and of personnel who stated that they overheard such communications, including Southall and Abram; reports made by Gaylor to United States authorities; information regarding the possibility of interference with radio communications made by SE-BDY; reports related or referring to the activities of foreign intelligence operatives, including information relating to the Ritchie report); information regarding SAIMR; records created within the Rhodesian Federation, such as from entities including police, intelligence, fire authorities and the Corps of Signals; immigration and airport records related to persons and aircraft of interest; records of foreign mercenaries held by Member States' immigration and other authorities; and information regarding the flight records of pilots of interest.

79. In addition to seeking specific responses to the precise queries asked of South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States, responses to discrete queries remain outstanding from Ethiopia, Italy and the Republic of the Congo.

80. Noting the significant new information that has been generated since the early inquiries, the General Assembly has requested an exploration of the feasibility of establishing a central archival holding or other holistic arrangement for records and archives related to this investigation. Making as many records as possible publicly available supports the goals of transparency and equity of access. To this end, the United Nations has created an online collection, which is hosted through the Archives and Records Management Section, from which I have received significant assistance over time. It is presently accessible via the following address: <https://archives.un.org/content/death-dag-hammarskjold>. Under this mandate I have liaised with the United Nations to identify further records that may be suitable for inclusion in such a collection.

81. Without prejudice to the prerogatives of the Secretary-General and the General Assembly, in the 2024 report I make six mutually compatible and reinforcing recommendations. These recommendations are: (a) that the United Nations appoint an independent person to continue the work undertaken pursuant to the current mandate of the Eminent Person; (b) that key Member States be urged to designate specific points of contact, whether independent appointees or other specific points of contact in the agencies or departments concerned, with all the necessary independence, access, clearances and resources to facilitate their assignments and expedite searches. Such points of contacts would be appointed to work collaboratively on any outstanding queries, including to determine whether relevant information exists in Member States' security, intelligence and defence archives; (c) that all Member States be called upon to provide relevant information and to ensure comprehensive access to all archives, more than 60 years after the crash; (d) that all Member States be encouraged, as may be appropriate, to make assistance available to the independent person and those voluntarily assisting the independent person, including to permit such persons to have the greatest practicable degree of access to information, should the work be continued; (e) that any further mandate propose that a conclusion be reached regarding whether Member States have complied with the process outlined by the General Assembly; and (f) that the United Nations continue to work towards making key documents of recent investigations publicly available through a dedicated online collection.

82. An incident that may have involved a hostile act on the Secretary-General of the United Nations and his party is a matter of highest public interest. This event holds significance not only to the Organization and the Member States it serves, but also to the families of those who died while serving in a noble mission for peace. Their patience and steadfastness has been resolute and to them I again offer my respect.

83. I firmly believe it to be almost certain that specific and crucial information exists which has not been disclosed by a small number of Member States. The primary obstacle to reaching any definitive conclusion regarding the cause or probable causes of the tragic event is the lack of full disclosure. A conclusive determination should only be made after a thorough assessment of all potentially material information. The reopening of the investigation by the General Assembly presents a legitimate opportunity that must be embraced. This process should not continue for an indeterminate period, but it would be unsatisfactory for a conclusion to remain out of reach because of a lack of disclosure so many years after the event. It is vital that all Member States be encouraged to provide the degree of collaborative disclosure required to enable the search for the full truth to be finally realized.

**Report of the Eminent Person appointed pursuant to
General Assembly resolution [77/252](#)**

**Investigation into the conditions and circumstances resulting in
the tragic death of Dag Hammarskjöld and of the members of the
party accompanying him**

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* Circulated in the language of submission only and without formal editing.

I. Introduction

A. Preliminary matters

1. The precise cause of the tragic plane crash that over 63 years ago claimed the life of the second Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld, along with 15 other dedicated women and men who served on a mission for peace in the Congo, remains an enduring mystery. Although various hypotheses for the cause or causes of the crash have been the subject of postulation, none has ever been clearly established.

2. During an era of ideological struggle marked by the Cold War and decolonization, the geopolitical context in which the event occurred was tense, a fact that was not conveyed in the early enquiries into the cause of the crash. In mid-1960, the Congo had recently become independent from Belgium. Its southern province of Katanga, which was rich in minerals, including strategically significant supplies of uranium and copper, in turn broke away soon after independence, seeking to decouple from the central Congolese Government. The self-styled leader of Katanga's move for independence, Moïse Tshombe, had the political support of some Western colonial powers, the military support of the mercenaries of others and significant financing through commercial operations, including those of Union Minière du Haut-Katanga.

3. Against this backdrop of dramatic global events, shortly after midnight on 18 September 1961, a chartered DC-6 plane known as the *Albertina* and registered as flight SE-BDY, crashed near Ndola, in what was then the British protectorate of Northern Rhodesia. Hammarskjöld, later posthumously awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and 14 of the 15 members of his party, died instantly. The sole survivor, Sergeant Harold Julien, succumbed to his injuries days later.

4. Over the past six decades, inquiries have explored various theories for the crash, including an aerial or ground attack or other external threat (external attack or threat), sabotage, hijacking and human error. None of these inquiries have provided conclusive answers. Following two Rhodesian inquiries in 1961/62, a United Nations Commission of Investigation concluded that it could not confirm or dismiss any of the proposed hypotheses. Consequently, in 1962 the General Assembly left an open verdict, taking note of the report and requesting the Secretary-General to inform it of any new evidence that might arise.

5. The work of the Commission of Jurists on the Inquiry into the Death of Dag Hammarskjöld (the Hammarskjöld Commission), a private and voluntary body of four renowned jurists, issued a report in 2013 that led to the General Assembly establishing an Independent Panel of Experts in 2015 (the Independent Panel) to examine and assess the probative value of new information relating to the tragic event. The Independent Panel effectively ruled out some theories, although it ultimately recommended a further inquiry or investigation. To that end, the Secretary-General, under the authority of the Assembly, granted me successive appointments as Eminent Person in 2017, 2018 and 2020, with mandates that required me to review potential new information, assess its probative value, determine the scope that any further inquiry or investigation should take and, since 2018, draw conclusions from the investigations already conducted. In the course of my work, I have been able to rule out certain hypotheses and to find support for others based on new information from Member States and individuals. I have provided reports as Eminent Person to the Secretary-General in 2017 (A/71/1042, the 2017 report), 2019 (A/73/973, the 2019 report) and 2022 (A/76/892, the 2022 report).

6. Building on the research done by individuals since 1962 and the recommendations of the Hammarskjöld Commission, the present report is a

continuation of the process that was recommenced within the United Nations framework by the Independent Panel in 2015 and has continued since with the reports of the Eminent Person. For ease of reference, an executive summary (see above) provides a synthesis of provisional conclusions that may be reached on the basis of information obtained between 2015 and 2024.

7. The introductory sections of the present report (sects. I and II) describe the relevant background, methodology and processes. Where appropriate, to avoid duplication of material already translated in prior reports, these sections adhere to the text used in those earlier reports, in view of the budgetary constraints faced by the United Nations during the present mandate. Sections III and IV contain a summary and assessment of the probative value of relevant new information received in the current period since the conclusion of the 2022 report and matters for further enquiry. Section V contains the findings and conclusions of the present report. Section VI contains my recommendations and concluding remarks.

8. For ease of reference, the present report follows a structure that broadly corresponds to my previous reports. This approach does not provide an endorsement of the relative likelihood of any particular hypothesis of the cause (or causes) of the aircraft crash. Rather, it is intended to provide consistency between the present and previous reports, given that a full treatment of the subject matter requires that they be read together.

9. I again note that my mandate has not been structured or resourced as a full investigation or inquiry, and that I do not have the authority to compel the production of information. As will be discussed below, the fact that disclosure by Member States is voluntary remains the greatest obstacle to obtaining the information needed to reach any firm conclusion. The material analysed in the report has thus been provided by Member States, individuals or experts with technical or specialized knowledge on a voluntary basis, or from publicly available literature that is accessible electronically.

10. The investigation of this matter appears to be continuously moving towards greater transparency. In addition to being indebted to Member States that have cooperated fully, as has been the case since the work of the Independent Panel in 2015, I have enjoyed unreserved support from and unrestricted access to the records of the United Nations Secretariat. I again thank, in particular, the Office of Legal Affairs and the Archives and Records Management Section. I am also grateful again for the excellent support provided by my assistant, Simon Thomas.

11. Given the limited nature of the mandate for my work, the search for the truth would be impoverished without the generous assistance that has again been freely given by many experts. As in previous years, I am very grateful to have received the benefit of the collaborative efforts and other assistance from (in alphabetical order and without title) Mandy Banton, Gudrun Brunegård, the team of the film *Cold Case Hammarskjöld* and in particular its head of research, Andreas Rocksén, Hans Corell, Jan Eliasson, Thomas Fitschen, Manuel Fröhlich, Torben Gülstorff, Colin Hendrickx, Gervase Hood, Jouni Kainulainen, Roland Karlsson, Henrik Larsen, Henning Melber, Mathias Mossberg, Bodil Katarina Nævdal, Greg Poulgrain, B. Rosato and David Wardrop. As I have acknowledged under previous mandates, singular recognition is due to Susan Williams, whose research generated the impetus for the Hammarskjöld Commission's work and who continues to offer significant effort and time to contribute freely to the work of this inquiry, which is greatly enriched by her expertise. In addition, under the present and prior mandates, Maurin Picard and Hans Kristian Simensen have also undertaken substantial research and generously provided the results to me voluntarily, even at a cost to their own publication of such information. They continue to generate new lines of enquiry in groundbreaking areas.

I have again been assisted by other individuals who seek to retain anonymity; I extend my sincere gratitude to them as well.

B. Summary of findings

12. The executive summary, which forms part of the present report, reflects the present state of cumulative knowledge regarding key matters, which has grown with each of the successive mandates of the Independent Panel of Experts and the Eminent Person. To avoid ambiguity with previous findings, where possible the executive summary replicates the text previously used, except where amendments are necessary in view of developments since an earlier version. Our knowledge of key matters of course remains subject to change based on future developments.

C. Background: previous investigations and inquiries

13. The first official investigations and inquiries into the tragic events commenced immediately after the crash within the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (also known as both the Rhodesian Federation and the Central African Federation; the former term is used in the present report), which was a British colonial territory comprising Northern Rhodesia, a protectorate, Southern Rhodesia, a self-governing colony, and Nyasaland, a protectorate, over which the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland retained responsibility for foreign affairs and other matters. The crash was first examined by the Investigation Board of the Department of Civil Aviation of the Federal Government of the Rhodesian Federation (the Rhodesian Board of Investigation), which was convened from 19 September to 2 November 1961. A Federal Commission of Inquiry was then established under the Federal Commission of Inquiry Act of 1955 (the Rhodesian Commission of Inquiry). Following this, in 1961 the General Assembly established the United Nations Commission of Investigation by its resolution [1628 \(XVI\)](#) to conduct an international investigation into the conditions and circumstances resulting in the tragic deaths. Collectively, I refer to the work of these three entities conducted in 1961/62 as the early inquiries.

14. As summarized in previous reports, the early inquiries had shortcomings. The Rhodesian Board of Investigation had limited time and completed its work in a number of weeks without hearing oral testimony of witnesses. The subsequent Rhodesian Commission of Inquiry was not impartial; it appears to have had a predisposition to find that the accident could be imputed to pilot error, which affected its consideration of the physical and testimonial evidence before it. Notably, in its first words in considering whether another aircraft may have been involved, the Rhodesian Commission stated “at the outset we would say no reason was suggested, and we cannot think of one, why anyone who might have been able to attack this aircraft from the air should ever have wanted to attack it as it carried Mr. Hammarskjöld on the mission he was then undertaking” (see [A/5069/Add.1](#), [A/5069/Add.1/Corr.1](#) and [A/5069/Add.1/Corr.2](#), annex III). The Rhodesian Commission had evidently formed a certain view before starting its work.

15. It is also evident that both of the Rhodesian inquiries gave little credibility generally to what they referred to as “African” witnesses, which was a reference to local black witnesses (see, for example, 2017 report, sect. VI.A), most of whose testimonies were disregarded. This reflected prevailing historical attitudes in circumstances where the Rhodesian inquiries were conducted under colonial rule. Reflecting this, as recalled by Williams in 2023, “in the photographs of the victims,

each of the bodies is labelled according to their nationality with the exception of Sergeant Serge Barrau from Haiti. His body is simply labelled as ‘Coloured’”.

16. Furthermore, the early inquiries dismissed or undervalued the evidence of the only first-hand witness, Sergeant Harold Julien, who was recorded to have made statements almost immediately upon his admission to hospital on 18 September 1961. These flaws were ultimately also reflected in the work of the 1961 United Nations Commission, which, despite operating in a more impartial and open manner in its proceedings, relied in significant part on evidence collected and analysed by the Rhodesian inquiries. This resulted in some of the shortcomings of this evidence being carried over to the United Nations Commission’s findings, particularly given that it heard only 27 witnesses itself. Although the United Nations Commission did make more substantial efforts to question local witnesses, it left out critical testimony, including for example witnesses Chappell, Joubert and Laurie, who had stated that they heard a second plane in the air after the time that SE-BDY must have crashed.

17. In its conclusion, the United Nations Commission was not able to find support for or to exclude any of the hypotheses regarding causes of the crash. Therefore, following the publication of that Commission’s report ([A/5069](#), [A/5069/Add.1](#), [A/5069/Add.1/Corr.1](#) and [A/5069/Add.1/Corr.2](#)), the General Assembly, in its resolution [1759 \(XVII\)](#), took note of the report and requested the Secretary-General to inform it of any new evidence.

18. In 2013, the 2013 Hammarskjöld Commission, a private and voluntary body, released its report, which concluded that the United Nations would be justified in resuming an examination of the tragic event. The Hammarskjöld Commission comprised four renowned international jurists, who reviewed and reported on a vast range of material, including the substantial work done by individual researchers such as Susan Williams, author of the 2011 book *Who Killed Hammarskjöld? The UN, the Cold War and White Supremacy in Africa*. The Hammarskjöld Commission’s conclusion that the United Nations would be justified in reopening the 1961 United Nations Commission’s inquiry was based on the finding that there was sufficient evidence to merit further inquiry into whether the plane was forced into its descent by some form of hostile action.

19. On 21 March 2014, the Secretary-General of the United Nations (at that time Mr. Ban Ki-moon), submitted the Hammarskjöld Commission’s report to the General Assembly, accompanied by a note with his assessment that the report contained new evidence ([A/68/800](#) and [A/68/800/Add.1](#)). Based on this, on 29 December 2014 the Assembly adopted resolution [69/246](#), in which it requested the Secretary-General to appoint an independent panel of experts to examine new information and assess its probative value, and encouraged Member States to release and provide any relevant records in their possession to the Secretary-General.

20. On 16 March 2015, the Secretary-General announced that he had appointed the Independent Panel to examine new information and to assess its probative value, as requested by the General Assembly. He appointed me, Mohamed Chande Othman, at that time the Chief Justice of the United Republic of Tanzania, as the Head of the Independent Panel, as well as an aviation safety expert, Kerryn Macaulay (Australia), and a ballistics expert, Henrik Larsen (Denmark). The Independent Panel had only 10 weeks to complete its work, which it did on 12 June 2015 when it provided its report to the Secretary-General. Pursuant to the report of the Independent Panel (see [A/70/132](#)), in 2016 the Secretary-General followed up on certain unanswered requests for information made by the Panel to Member States. On 16 August 2016, the Secretary-General reported to the Assembly on this follow-up ([A/70/1017](#)), following which the Assembly adopted resolution [71/260](#) on 23 December 2016. In that resolution, the Assembly, among other things, requested that the Secretary-General

appoint an eminent person to review the potential new information and assess its probative value, to determine the scope that any further inquiry or investigation should take and, if possible, to draw conclusions from the investigations already conducted.

21. Since the conclusion of the work of the Independent Panel, as Eminent Person appointed pursuant to successive General Assembly resolutions [71/260](#), [72/252](#) and [74/248](#), I have authored several reports, which the Secretary-General transmitted to the General Assembly in September in each of 2017 ([A/71/1042](#)), 2019 ([A/73/973](#)) and 2022 ([A/76/892](#)). The 2017 and 2019 reports analysed significant new information from Member States and private individuals. Based on that information it was found to be plausible that an external attack or threat was a cause of the crash, and that the burden of proof had shifted to Member States to show that they had conducted a full review of records and archives in their custody or possession.

22. The conclusions presented in the 2017 and 2019 reports were affirmed in the 2022 report, in which I analysed information that came primarily from private individuals rather than Member States. In the 2022 report, I again found that South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States were almost certain to hold important undisclosed information and concluded that the burden of proof to conduct a full review of records and archives resulting in full disclosure had not been discharged. I noted, however, that each of these Member States had committed at a high level to full disclosure. For a complete consideration of the claims set out in the present report, it is necessary to read in full the Independent Panel report and my 2017, 2019 and 2022 reports.

23. Further to its consideration of the 2022 report, in resolution [77/252](#) the General Assembly requested the reappointment of the Eminent Person with a mandate reflecting that contained in resolution [74/248](#). Member States were urged to make information available and called upon to cooperate fully with the Eminent Person, including by appointing without delay independent and high-ranking officials to determine whether relevant information existed within their security, intelligence and defence archives. Member States were also called upon to encourage individuals and private entities to make information available and to encourage assistance to be made available on a voluntary basis to assist in specific tasks that required completion at the request of the Eminent Person.

24. In describing the early inquiries, it is important to note that they mention almost nothing of the historical context and situational setting in which the crash occurred. Even though the United Nations was engaged in an active conflict to support the reintegration of the Congo, the Rhodesian Board of Investigation and the Rhodesian Commission of Inquiry barely mentioned the secession of Katanga or the purpose of Hammarskjöld's voyage to Ndola, which was to meet the leader of the secessionist province of Katanga, Moïse Tshombe, for ceasefire talks. United Nations forces were under daily attack in the territory over which flight SE-BDY traversed before its crash. The report of the United Nations Commission of 1961 provides some background operational context of the United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC) and the purpose of the Secretary-General's visit, but it primarily relied on the work done by the Rhodesian Board and Commission. Apart from in the introductory pages, it does not mention, for example, mercenary activity in Katanga and it almost exclusively restricts its analysis to technical matters such as those relating to the crash. The fact that flight SE-BDY was planned and unsuccessfully carried out in a highly volatile political and military situation in 1961 in the crucible of a context involving decolonization and the Cold War was barely referenced. As a result, the early inquiries failed to have regard to a broad range of potentially important information, much of which has only come to light in recent years.

25. Accordingly, since 2015, search requests to Member States and within the United Nations archives have aimed at better understanding the relevant context in which the crash took place. This approach has been of much utility in establishing facts in areas including, for example, the interception of United Nations communications and the capability of the armed forces of Katanga. Adequate acknowledgment of the relevant context has again been deemed important in the course of the work undertaken during my present mandate. The context within which the events in question occurred allows us to determine whether a hypothesis may be excluded or potentially supported on the basis of, for example, the fact that an individual, or matériel or other equipment was or was not present in the area at the time. The more that searches have been conducted or information has been made publicly available, the more potentially new and relevant information has surfaced.

26. As a further preliminary matter, I note that where a finding was made in the 2017, 2019 or 2022 reports regarding an act attributable to a Member State, the publication of those reports and my subsequent correspondence with the Member State comprised an opportunity for the Member State to provide additional information or to offer clarification. Germany, through its Independent Appointee, was the only Member State to provide such clarification between 2022 and 2024. Accordingly, as no amendment or clarification was sought or provided by other Member States, I consider the findings of the 2017, 2019 and 2022 reports relating to the respective Member State, or information created or held by it, to be taken to be affirmed.

D. Mandate and definitions

27. The role assigned to me as Eminent Person reflects and builds on the work of the Independent Panel. Pursuant to General Assembly resolutions [71/260](#), [72/252](#), [74/248](#) and [77/252](#), the role of the Eminent Person, although being short of a full investigation or inquiry, has required the review of new information and the assessment of its probative value. The mandate also includes determining the scope that any further inquiry or investigation should take and, if possible, drawing conclusions from the investigations already conducted.

28. The Independent Panel considered the definition of “new information” to fit broadly within two categories: that which was not available to the United Nations Commission in 1961, and that which may have been available to the United Nations Commission, but which could be seen in a new light owing to the emergence of new material, scientific or technical developments or best practice. I have adopted a similar approach and, as required, have reconsidered information previously analysed in the light of new information that has emerged.

29. Under the present mandate, as in prior years, I have applied a broad, non-exclusionary definition in considering what may be “relevant” in my approach to the marshalling and assessment of new information. I have requested that Member States do the same, rather than adopting an idiosyncratic or technical definition. The aim of defining “relevant” information as such is to ensure that all information that may ultimately bear on an assessment of the cause of the crash has been identified. Thus, a piece of information should still be identified as potentially relevant, even if a domestic legal or other framework does not require or allow it to be disclosed. To be satisfactory, Member States have been requested to ensure that they identify with precision the nature and locations of their searches, that the searches have been conducted by individuals with sufficient contextual knowledge and that the reviews may be said to be unrestricted, unfettered and exhaustive.

30. The definition of “probative value” that has been applied since the Independent Panel, and which I continue to apply, is whether and to what degree the information in question tends to prove or disprove, either by itself or in combination with other information, the existence or non-existence of a relevant fact or facts. In the case of each piece of potential new information, I have considered the following non-exhaustive criteria: the authenticity of the information (including consistency and contemporaneousness), the type of information (e.g. primary, secondary, hearsay or circumstantial), its credibility (including its consistency with other information or established facts), any expert technical assessments and the degree to which the information is corroborated by other material. The fact that an item of new information may be assessed as having, for example, weak probative value will not necessarily mean that the hypothesis to which it relates has been disproved. Rather, the assessment relates specifically to the piece of evidence and whether it tends to prove or disprove a fact in question. Furthermore, the assessment of a piece of information may change as, relative to other developing information, it may be assessed to have become of increased or reduced probative value.

E. Methodology and activities

1. Description of methodology and activities

31. The role of the Eminent Person, as mandated by the resolutions described above, has required an assessment of information obtained from Member States and individuals, consultation with government representatives and private sources of information and the interviewing of witnesses, including expert witnesses. In my work I have invited, from a broad range of sources, the submission of potential new information that has an identifiable factual, legal, circumstantial or inferential basis for consideration. However, as much as I have been required to gather and analyse new information, a key part of my role has also been to rule out theories or allegations that are unsupported by evidence, so as to be able to focus the search on those that remain. When presented with what may be described as a bare assertion, I have encouraged the identification of a proper basis or evidentiary foundation.

32. I have maintained the four categories described by the Independent Panel for the assessment of the probative value of new information: nil, weak, moderate or strong.

33. In accordance with the General Assembly’s urging that Member States release any relevant records in their possession, as specified in resolutions [69/246](#), [71/260](#), [72/252](#), [74/248](#) and [77/252](#), in 2023 and 2024 I sent specific requests for information to South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States. I also wrote to Ethiopia, Germany, Italy, the Republic of the Congo, Sweden and Zimbabwe with discrete requests for information and/or to request assistance. The requests and the results are discussed further in sections II to IV below.

34. Individuals have also continued to provide me with information on a voluntary basis, as discussed in sections III and IV below. At times, this information has been provided directly and from private sources; at others it has resulted from the publication of material such as film, literary and academic works. In compiling my report, I have also been assisted by expert opinions and technical assessments from individuals who have acted on a voluntary basis, as acknowledged above. I am again grateful for their generosity, expertise and collegiality in providing contributions without expectation of recompense. For expert assessments related to aircraft, in 2023 and 2024 I received assistance from Roland Karlsson, the results of which are discussed below. This was undertaken through the Government of Sweden, who arranged for the Swedish Defence Research Agency to be engaged. I express sincere

appreciation to Sweden, Karlsson and the Agency for the significant contributions of their work.

2. Constraints and limitations

35. As noted, as Eminent Person I have neither a mandate nor the attendant resources to conduct a full investigation. A further limitation on my work is that, although I have enjoyed beneficial interactions with many Member States, any cooperation that I have been grateful to receive has been on a voluntary basis. I have no power to compel any Government to search for or produce information. I consider it to be almost certain that important undisclosed information is held by several specific Member States. In circumstances where the decision whether to disclose that information is voluntary, the lack of full disclosure is what prevents any firm conclusion from being able to be reached about the cause or causes of the plane crash.

36. My requests for information have been specific and primarily directed towards a small number of Member States. This is owing to several factors, including geographical proximity and the institutional or individual presence that these Member States and their personnel had in and around the Congo at the relevant time. The approach should not be taken to mean that there is not important information in other Member States or from private sources, or that additional searches will not involve sources in locations not previously considered.

37. The present report forms part of an iterative search for the full truth of the tragic event. It does not claim to be a comprehensive treatise on the subject matter or on historical events that are referred to as providing relevant context to the plane crash. In the 2019 and 2022 reports, I stated that it was almost certain that we had not yet seen all relevant material that exists regarding the ultimate question of what caused the plane to crash. This finding is again strengthened by the new information analysed during the present mandate.

II. Searches for new information

A. Introduction

38. It is necessary to provide a brief overview of how searches for new information have been conducted since the 2015 work of the Independent Panel and then subsequently under the mandates of the Eminent Person between 2017 and 2024.

39. In 2015, the Independent Panel received a significant body of information that had been collated over the preceding years, including the information analysed by the Hammarskjöld Commission. All Member States were requested to conduct searches for relevant information in their records and archives. Relatively little was received from Member States, but a voluminous amount of new information from private sources and records was considered.

40. In 2017, following up on areas for further enquiry that had been identified by the Independent Panel, I requested eight Member States that were most likely to hold immediately relevant information, and the United Nations itself, to extend the subject matter of previous searches to include contextual information not considered by the early inquiries. In particular, the Independent Panel had concluded that there might be an “appreciable lead” in new eyewitness testimony, claims of alleged intercepts of communications regarding the plane crash and information concerning the capability of the armed forces in Katanga and its air force (Avikat). Accordingly, in my requests to Member States and the United Nations I requested that searches focus on the following non-exhaustive categories regarding the situation in and around the

Congolese province of Katanga in 1961: (a) intercepts of communications regarding the plane crash or surrounding events; (b) the capability of the armed forces of Katanga, including its air force; (c) the presence of foreign military, paramilitary or irregular (including mercenary) troops and/or personnel; (d) the presence of foreign intelligence agencies or personnel; (e) attacks on ONUC; and (f) intelligence, security, technical and/or political cooperation with the provincial government of Katanga.

41. The results of searches conducted in 2017 included significant new information, with responses generating thousands of pages of material as analysed in section IV of the 2017 report. I was grateful to Belgium, Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States, all of which provided significant new information. However, other than limited documents from Belgium and Germany, all information provided appeared to have resulted from searches within diplomatic and/or political archives. Noting information that established that certain Member States had intelligence, security and defence personnel in and around the Congo at the relevant time who must have generated information, I recommended that those Member States each appoint a high-ranking official who was independent from the executive branch of government and who had requisite clearances and resources to examine comprehensively relevant intelligence, security and defence archives. This recommendation was made to allow Member States to comply with their own domestic legal frameworks and sensitivity requirements, while identifying whether information existed that might shed light on the circumstances surrounding the crash of SE-BDY.

42. Following the 2017 report, the General Assembly in resolution [72/252](#) encouraged Member States to appoint an independent and high-ranking official to conduct a dedicated internal review of their intelligence, security and defence archives. Accordingly, in 2018 I requested 14 Member States to each appoint an independent and high-ranking official (Independent Appointee) to conduct a dedicated internal review of their intelligence, security and defence archives. Those 14 Member States were Angola, Belgium, Canada, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, France, Germany, Portugal, the Russian Federation, South Africa, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Following the express directions of the Assembly, this was the first time that Member States had been specifically requested to ensure that their searches included intelligence, security and defence archives.

43. The 2019 report described the results of the work of the independent appointees and included a table showing the status of their appointments. Although a majority of Member States engaged with the process requested by the General Assembly and important new information was generated, substantive disclosure by certain key Member States did not result. In particular, the 2019 report noted that South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States had not provided any information from their intelligence, security and defence archives. This was despite it having been established by specific information that these Member States were almost certain to hold important undisclosed information. Regarding the Russian Federation, although it had confirmed performing searches in its intelligence, security and defence archives, it had not adopted the process of nominating an independent appointee. For this reason, I noted that it would be desirable for the Russian Federation to also follow the process outlined by the Assembly.

44. The General Assembly in resolution [74/248](#) called upon the Member States referred to in the 2019 report to cooperate with and assist the Eminent Person fully, including by appointing independent appointees without delay, and encouraged the Eminent Person to remain engaged with all high-ranking officials, including those who had concluded their work. As a result, in 2020 I wrote to the Russian Federation, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States to request their renewed

engagement with the process requested by the Assembly. As already noted, I also corresponded with and sought assistance from other Member States. The responses that I received from Member States were outlined in the 2022 report. I was grateful to receive significant cooperation from many; however, the assistance that I received from some Member States was incomplete. In respect of South Africa, I did not receive any new information or specific responses to the matters I identified. In respect of the United Kingdom, I did not receive any new information and received only some responses to the matters I identified. In respect of the United States, I did not receive specific responses to the matters I identified. I reported that each of these three Member States were likely to hold important undisclosed information, based on the existing record of other information that I had analysed.

45. Following the 2022 report, in resolution [77/252](#) the General Assembly again called upon the Member States referred to in the 2022 report to cooperate with and assist the Eminent Person fully, including by appointing independent appointees without delay. The Eminent Person was encouraged to remain engaged with all high-ranking officials, including those who had concluded their work. As a result, in 2023 I wrote to South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States to request their renewed engagement with the process requested by the Assembly. I also wrote to Ethiopia, Germany, Italy, the Republic of the Congo, Sweden and Zimbabwe with discrete requests for information and/or to request assistance. The responses that I received from Member States are outlined below in sect. II.B.

46. In 2023 and 2024, the Secretary-General offered his assistance to me by way of writing to specific Member States to follow up on my outstanding requests for information. In that regard, in January 2024 the Secretary-General wrote directly to Ethiopia, the Republic of the Congo, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States, enclosing a copy of my correspondence to those Member States of January 2024. I was grateful for this important assistance from the Secretary-General and for his expression of personal commitment to the mandate.

47. In addition to requests for information from Member States, in 2023 and 2024 I also received contributions from individual researchers and private archives. I am very appreciative of the efforts of these individuals, who have generated almost all the new information that is analysed in the present report. I describe the significance of this below.

B. Responses from Member States

Summary of responses

48. The following is a summary of the key correspondence with the Member States with which I engaged in 2023 and 2024 regarding the request that they conduct dedicated searches for information, including in their intelligence, security and defence archives.

Republic of the Congo

49. Specific requests were made to the Republic of the Congo between 2019 and 2024 that searches be conducted for information about persons and aircraft of interest, including in immigration and airport records from Brazzaville in September 1961. Specifically, I noted the area of potential interest as concerning a Dornier DO-28 aircraft (possibly with the registration code of flight KA-3016, KA-0016, KA-0019 or KA-19) that could have been used by the armed forces of Katanga in 1961, and certain personalities who could have piloted the plane, as it transited through Brazzaville. In this regard, I asked that searches be conducted of logs recording take-

offs and landings of planes in the airports of Brazzaville and surrounding areas in September 1961.

50. In 2024, I wrote to the Republic of the Congo to again request that records and archives, including those of its airports and Air Force, be searched to ascertain whether they contain any information relating to the areas of interest. As noted above, the Secretary-General also wrote to follow up on these requests in 2024. At the time of writing the present report, no response has been received from the Republic of the Congo.

Ethiopia

51. Specific requests have been made to Ethiopia between 2022 and 2024 that searches be conducted for any information regarding a report that was apparently made by Tore Meijer, a Swedish instructor at the Ethiopian Air Force in 1961, to the Head of the Air Force. Meijer stated that he had overheard a conversation on short-wave radio around midnight on the night of 17 to 18 September 1961. Meijer said that the conversation was between flight controllers, one of whom was at Ndola airport, and the flight controllers expressed surprise that one plane was being unexpectedly followed by another.

52. According to a March 1994 article in *Dagens Nyheter*, Meijer stated as follows: “an American colleague of mine came home with a nice short-wave radio, a rarity, and asked me if I wanted to buy it. During the evening of 17 September, I was testing the radio at about 10 p.m. (GMT). I’m testing the various frequencies and all of a sudden I hear a conversation in English, obviously from an airport control tower. I also heard the name ‘Ndola’. The voice says, ‘he’s approaching the airport, he’s turning ... he’s levelling’— where the pilot is approaching the actual landing strip. Then I hear the same voice saying, ‘another plane is approaching from behind, what is that?’. The voice says, ‘He breaks off the plan ... he continues’, after which the transmission ended”. Meijer informed or attempted to inform the Head of the Ethiopian Air Force and United States colleagues on 18 or 19 September 1961 about the incident.

53. In 2024, I wrote to Ethiopia to again request that Ethiopian records and archives, including those of its Air Force, be searched to ascertain whether they contain any information relating to Meijer (including his service record with the Ethiopian Air Force flying school), the incident that Meijer said he reported, or the crash of the Secretary-General’s plane over Ndola, Northern Rhodesia.

54. As noted above, the Secretary-General also wrote to follow up on these requests in 2024. However, at the time of writing the present report, no response had been received from Ethiopia.

Italy

55. In 2024 I wrote to Italy to request that it conduct specific searches of its archives. Although Italy had in 2015 and 2018, through generic correspondence sent to each Member State, been requested by the United Nations to search for any relevant information regarding the plane crash, this was the first time that I had made a specific request to Italy. In addition to a request for searches within a general category of documents referring to the plane crash or subsequent investigations, I also asked Italy for information regarding a death warrant purportedly issued to Enrico Mattei before his death in a plane crash in 1962. The basis for this was information supplied to me by Picard, which is discussed below in section III.A.2.

56. Italy confirmed having commenced enquiries through its Department of Justice, but the searches for information were not complete as at the time of the present report.

In meetings with representatives of the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations, the support of Italy for the investigation was extended to me, for which I was grateful. I flag the enquiries with Italy as a matter for future follow-up.

Germany

57. In 2018, Germany appointed Thomas Fitschen as its Independent Appointee. Fitschen confirmed that he had been given full access by Germany to all files and archives, including those of the Federal Intelligence Service (Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND)) and of the Intelligence Service of the former Democratic Republic of Germany (Staatssicherheitsdienst). In 2019 and 2020, Fitschen provided reports to me based on research conducted in public and private archives.

58. As acknowledged in the 2022 report, Fitschen has continued over time to undertake research on topics of interest regarding information that may be found in German archives. This work, which continued in 2023 and 2024, has resulted in the provision of additional reports and source documents to me. I am grateful to have had the benefit of ongoing exchanges with Fitschen, which were, in my view, commended by the General Assembly in paragraphs 3 and 4 of resolution [77/252](#). Through those paragraphs, the Assembly has respectively encouraged the Eminent Person to remain engaged with all high-ranking officials, including those who have concluded their work, and encouraged Member States to make assistance available to the Eminent Person.

59. Fitschen provided a further report to me in April 2024, in which he also acknowledged the support of staff of the Political Archives of the German Federal Foreign Office, the archives section of BND, Ms. Margot Nistl at the Dornier/Airbus archives, and Professor Manuel Fröhlich. I am grateful for the significant work undertaken by Fitschen, the results of which are discussed below in section III.

South Africa

60. In 2019, South Africa appointed Mxolisi Nkosi as a focal point for this matter. No substantive report was received from South Africa in 2019.

61. In 2021, the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa, Grace Naledi Mandisa Pandor, advised that “no documents relating to the death of former UNSG Hammarskjöld” had been found. In response, I stated that in addition to any documents explicitly referring to the crash, I had requested that searches be undertaken for specific information concerning the transfer of personnel and equipment from South Africa to Katanga, information on South African mercenaries and intelligence personnel who served or were otherwise involved with Katanga, links between Katangan, Belgian and South African entities (both security services and paramilitary elements) and other matters.

62. In 2023 and 2024, I wrote to South Africa to reiterate my request that specific searches be made. A copy of my most recent substantive correspondence and the reply is contained in the annexes to the present report.

63. As noted above, the Secretary-General also wrote to follow up on these requests in 2024. In May 2024, South Africa wrote to me to reiterate support for the investigation and to propose that various departments could be contacted directly to request assistance. I believe this is a constructive proposal, for which I am grateful.

64. I consider that there are grounds to believe that further undisclosed information exists in the records and archives of South Africa. I discuss these matters further below.

United Kingdom

65. In response to my request, in November 2018 the United Kingdom stated that it did not intend to appoint an independent appointee because all information of direct value to the investigation had already been made available.

66. In June 2019, in response to further requests, the United Kingdom appointed Graham Hand as Independent Appointee. However, Mr. Hand stated that no further information would be provided because, he said, the United Kingdom had already provided all responsive documents.

67. In March 2020, I reiterated the specific requests for information that had previously been made but not responded to and noted that no information had been received from British intelligence, security or defence archives. In December 2020, Mr. Hand re-stated his previous position that all documents held by the British Government that contained information relevant to the inquiry into the death of the late Secretary-General had been identified and submitted.

68. In 2021, on invitation, I raised specific queries with the United Kingdom and noted the observation of the Zimbabwean Independent Appointee that, prior to Zimbabwe's independence, Rhodesian authorities, who were under the direction of British colonial authorities, had "meticulously removed almost every record or archive associated with the Dag Hammarskjöld Crash".

69. On further invitation in 2022, I wrote to the United Kingdom with discrete queries that resulted from new information I had received from other sources. While I received a response from the United Kingdom, it did not address my specific requests for information or indicate the list of the archives that had been searched, those that had been excluded from searches and the methodology applied to the work.

70. In 2023 and 2024, I wrote to the United Kingdom to reiterate my request that precise searches be made and that specific questions be responded to. A copy of my most recent substantive correspondence and the reply is contained in the annexes to the present report.

71. As noted above, the Secretary-General also wrote to follow up on these requests in 2024. In April 2024, the Head of the United Nations and Multilateral Department, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Phil Dixon, wrote to me but did not respond to my specific requests. Dixon's response stated relevantly that "With regards the points in your Annexure, I note that previous correspondence, including between you and Mr. Hand as well as our letter to you of 18 July 2022, already address some of these matters at length. In respect of your request for a full list of records, our firm assessment (independently confirmed by Mr. Hand) remains that all information of value to the Inquiry has already been provided to the Inquiry itself or has been released to The National Archives at Kew and is available to the public there".

72. I consider that there are grounds to believe that further undisclosed information exists in the records and archives of the United Kingdom, in accordance with the conclusions reached in the 2022 report. I discuss these matters further below.

United States

73. In response to my request of April 2018, in April 2019 the United States Independent Appointee stated that searches by the United States had been comprehensive and had included intelligence, security and defence archives. A single document was sent to me, which was assessed in the 2019 report. In the 2019 report, I noted that matters raised in my correspondence had not been responded to and might be considered in the future.

74. In 2020 and 2021, I renewed my requests to the United States in further correspondence that outlined specific questions. I also enclosed information explaining why it was understood that the United States had created or held records that had not been disclosed, concerning the identity of relevant individuals and entities whose records should be reviewed, and requesting that any response include a detailed list of the archives that had been searched, those that had been excluded from searches and the methodology applied to the work, including the search terms applied.

75. In November 2021, the United States Independent Appointee, David McFarland, stated that the United States had conducted outreach to its intelligence community to determine whether any additional information might exist. This included engaging with the Director of National Intelligence, Avril Haines, who tasked the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Defence Intelligence Agency to search contemporary and archival records. According to McFarland, the only result of that search being coordinated by CIA was the identification of two issues of the “President’s Intelligence Checklist”, dated 18 and 19 September 1961. Other than those two issues, it was stated that “no holdings reviewed then, or acquired since, mention the crash or Hammarskjöld’s death”, notwithstanding what was said to have been exhaustive searches by CIA staff, the Defence Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency (NSA) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. My requests for information at a more granular level were not responded to. Neither was a response received to my request for a list of the archives that had been searched, those that had been excluded from searches and the methodology applied to the work, including the search terms applied.

76. In 2023 and 2024, I wrote to the United States to reiterate my request that precise searches be made and that specific questions be responded to. A copy of my most recent substantive correspondence and the reply is contained in the annexes to the present report.

77. As noted above, the Secretary-General also wrote to follow up on these requests in 2024. In March 2024, Mr. McFarland wrote to me, stating “I am not aware of any additional information pertaining to the specific questions in your request, but will reconfirm with relevant agencies”. At the time of writing the present report, I had not heard further in response to my requests or questions, although I received from McFarland renewed assurances of cooperation by the United States.

78. I consider that there are grounds to believe that further undisclosed information exists in the records and archives of the United States, in accordance with the conclusions reached in the 2022 report. I discuss these matters further below.

C. United Nations archives

79. As in previous years, I confirm that I have had unrestricted access to all United Nations archives, regardless of classification level. I am advised by the Secretary-General that all ONUC files are open to the public, without restriction, with the exception of 23 files. Those 23 files retain a “strictly confidential” status, consistent with established policies of the United Nations. I was given access to those 23 files without restriction in 2018/19. Adopting the same definition of “relevance” as I have requested of Member States, as stated in the 2019 report, none of those files holds information relevant to the Dag Hammarskjöld investigation.

80. In 2022, I was advised by the Archives and Records Management Section, from which I have been grateful to receive timely assistance over the years, that ongoing work had been performed in relation to the digitization of the ONUC archives. The

digitization of such information is an important enabler of transparency, including because it allows online access to information and verification of source documents.

D. Observations on Member State responses and limitations of searches

81. In the 2019 and 2022 reports, I concluded that the search process in this matter remained incomplete, primarily because of undisclosed records that were almost certain to be held by Member States. This conclusion has been further substantiated under the current mandate.

82. As detailed below, significant new information has been identified and analysed under the current mandate. Almost all information of probative value has come from individuals, rather than Member States.

83. Although some Member States have substantially cooperated, not all have conducted thorough searches with full transparency or with resultant disclosure. I am unable to conclude that all potentially relevant information has been identified. Despite a clear directive from the General Assembly, a small number of Member States, which are almost certain to hold relevant information, have not been forthcoming with the disclosure requested.

84. I acknowledge that conducting searches in historical archives presents challenges. Many archives of the era are not digitized, requiring labour-intensive manual searches. Even digitized material may not be keyword searchable because of difficulties such as character recognition of old typeset or handwritten documents, material degradation, or variations in spelling. As a result, manual reviews are often necessary to ensure accuracy. Furthermore, records and archives are often dispersed and may appear in multiple disparate locations, and/or be held by different entities within a Member State.

85. Beyond such technical issues, there are substantive challenges. Individuals conducting searches must possess a deep contextual understanding of this matter and key events in and around the Congo in 1961. Without this, relevant information may be overlooked. For this reason, in my correspondence with Member States and previous reports I have attempted to explain, for example, the identities of individuals of interest and the significance of geographical locations and types of aircraft.

86. In summary, a comprehensive search will not be ensured if a Member State merely searches for keywords such as “Hamarskjöld” or “plane crash”. That is why I have, since 2017, given Member States detailed criteria for searches, including names of persons, equipment, subject matter and places. In cases where Member States engaged with these processes as envisaged, the results were excellent (see 2019 report, sect. II.B). However, where these processes were not followed as envisaged, the search process cannot be described as fully reassuring or complete. This is a matter to which I return below.

III. New information about possible causes of the crash

87. The present section describes and analyses new information received between 2023 and 2024 from Member States and individuals regarding possible causes of the crash. Whether a specific assessment of probative value is made depends on the nature and type of the information. Where information is incomplete or warrants further enquiry, this is identified. The new information discussed in this section is synthesized in the cumulative summary of findings, as presented in the executive summary above.

88. Significant advancements continue to be made in the body of knowledge relevant to possible causes of the crash. New information identified during the present mandate includes information relating to the probable intercepts of relevant communications, the possible involvement of mercenary pilots or other agents in a deliberate act against flight SE-BDY, the possible type of aircraft used in any such act, the possibility of a ground attack or sabotage against flight SE-BDY, the presence and role of foreign actors, including intelligence agencies and personnel, and related matters.

A. Aerial or ground attack or other external threat

89. Significant new information has been identified in recent years regarding the possibility that flight SE-BDY was attacked or menaced during its final landing approach to Ndola airport. If such an event occurred, it might have directly caused the plane to crash, or have resulted in a distraction of the pilots at a critical point of the landing approach. Although physical evidentiary traces of an attack would be important information, an absence of such traces alone does not rule out the possibility of such an event. New and relevant information on this topic has continued to be received each year since the Independent Panel concluded its review, including during the period 2023–2024.

90. Information concerning communications by or about flight SE-BDY is considered in the present section. This includes information about the interception of such communications (including those of the United Nations more broadly), because any such interception would have been of potential utility in the case of any external threat, and because undisclosed records of communications remain key to understanding the events leading up to and after the plane crash.

91. Information received between 2023 and 2024 further develops the information analysed in 2022 and also provides additional new information, as described below.

1. Radio communications

(a) Paul Abram

92. In 2015, the Independent Panel assessed information provided by Paul Abram, a former United States Air Force Security Services Officer, in which he described hearing transmissions related to the shooting down of an aircraft in or near the Congo on the night of 17 to 18 September 1961 while stationed at an NSA listening post in Heraklion (Irakleio), on the island of Crete, Greece. Abram stated that he recorded the information on a tape and that the tape would have been shared with the NSA in Fort Meade, Maryland, and with Government Communications Headquarters, the British intelligence and security organization.

93. Between 2015 and 2017, the United States did not respond to requests for information regarding Abram’s service record, and later stated that it did not have information on him. After Abram provided me with further information in 2017 (including his Air Force number and service record, education records and identifier/code “AbelBaker”), in 2019 the United States confirmed that Abram was a “voice intercept protocol specialist”. However, no information was provided, such as to confirm Abram’s purported service history or to confirm or dispel his claims. Notably, after the 2019 report was published, I was informed that Abram had passed away.

94. In the 2022 report, I analysed new information from voluntary researcher Rosato regarding Abram’s service history. The information included that Abram’s service over the relevant period appeared to be with the 6930th Radio Mobile Group based in Heraklion, Crete, which was tasked with monitoring voice transmissions. Other

individuals who appear to have been serving with the 6930th Radio Mobile Group in 1961 include Roger Adams, Gerald Bussure, Ora Clark, Stephen Gellman, Ronald Hei, Brian White, Robert Ampula and Salvatore Lamanna.

95. In 2022, I conveyed this information to the United States and requested confirmation of any information or details regarding the incident alleged by Abram. No response was received.

96. In 2024, I re-stated the new information about Abram to the United States and requested access to relevant records and archives, including those that would be confirming of the location and duties of Abram on 17 to 18 September 1961, a list of any records created by or referring to him from September 1961, and a list of relevant records by or relating to the named colleagues stationed with Abram on 17 to 18 September 1961. No response to the request was received.

97. Under each of my mandates, the United States has been given an opportunity to clarify Abram's service history and account of the night of the crash (see 2022 report, sect. III.A.1 (a)). The United States is the sole known custodian of records that could have responded to Abram's claims while he was alive and could answer to any contrary contention. The decision not to provide an explanation or contrary response to the apparently credible information that has developed over many years about Abram's service history may be seen to strengthen his claims. It is less clear cut what influence, if any, this may have on the substantive claims made by Abram.

98. In the overall context, I would confirm my previous assessment that Abram's claims are of strong probative value that the United States was monitoring radio traffic and that relevant records of transcripts were highly likely to have been created by the United States. Regarding the claim that Abram overheard an attack on SE-BDY, I retain the assessment of the probative value of this information as being moderate.

(b) Charles Southall

99. In 2015, the Independent Panel assessed information provided by Charles Southall, a former United States Navy Officer stationed at an NSA communications facility near Nicosia, Cyprus, in 1961. Southall had consistently informed Swedish and United States officials since at least the 1960s that while serving with NSA in that location, on 17 to 18 September 1961 he overheard a CIA radio intercept that was shared with NSA, describing an attack on what was understood to be Hammarskjöld's plane.

100. In 2015, the United States did not respond to requests for information regarding Southall's service record. In 2016, the United States confirmed that Southall had joined the Navy in 1955, was released from active duty in 1969 and retired as a commander from the Navy Reserve in 1978. However, despite requests to the United States each year since 2016, no information has been received to confirm or dispel Southall's claims, including any response to the questions as to where Southall was stationed, whether he worked in support of NSA or whether there were records of the transcripts that he said had been created.

101. In the 2022 report, I analysed new information from Rosato regarding Southall's service history. That information included publicly available records from the United States Navy (Navy Muster Roll 2339, 1949–1971, and Register of Commissioned and Warrant Officers of the United States Navy and Marine Corps on Active Duty 1961) that appear to confirm that Southall's service over the relevant period was with NSA in Nicosia (with designations 1310 and 1610) between at least July and October 1961 and that he had been trained in cryptological warfare. Furthermore, Southall appeared to have been stationed in that location with other individuals, including Gaspare Tamburello, Paul Dillingham, William Hawley, Robert Jennings, Robert Perusse,

Leory Sommer and Wat Tyler Cluverius. Southall had previously mentioned Cluverius by name and said that he had called him to speak about the matter later when Cluverius was posted as a United States diplomat, but Cluverius stated “I can’t speak about that” as it was on an open telephone line. Cluverius died before Southall was able to meet him in person to speak about the matter.

102. In 2022, I conveyed the further information about Southall’s service record to the United States and requested confirmation of any information or details regarding the incident alleged by Southall. I also asked the United States to include details of any internal investigation made during the 1990s or since into Southall’s claims, for the occurrence of which there was some evidence. No response was received.

103. In 2024, I restated the new information about Southall to the United States and requested access to relevant records and archives, including those confirming the location and duties of Southall on 17 to 18 September 1961, a list of any records created by or referring to him from September 1961, a list of relevant records by or relating to the named colleagues stationed with Southall on 17 to 18 September 1961, a list of records created or held by the United States Bureau of Intelligence and Research in the early 1990s regarding a statement made by its employee (Ms. Enstrom) that “new information indicates that Hammarskjöld’s plane may have been shot down”, and a list of any United States investigations or inquiries into the allegations made by Southall about the plane crash. No response to this request was received.

104. Under each of my mandates the United States has been given an opportunity to clarify Southall’s service history and account of the night of the crash, which account appears to have been consistent over time for almost 50 years: from at least 1967 until at least 2013 (see 2019 report, sect. III.A.1 (b), and 2022 report, sect. III.A.1 (b)). The United States is the sole known custodian of records that could counter Southall’s claims, and he interacted with its Government about the claims while alive. The decision not to provide an explanation or contrary response to the apparently credible information that has developed over many years about Southall’s service history may be seen to strengthen his claims. It is less clear cut what influence, if any, this may have on the substantive claims made by Southall.

105. In the overall context, I would confirm my previous assessment that Southall’s claims are of strong probative value that the United States was monitoring radio traffic and that relevant records of transcripts were highly likely to have been created by the United States. Regarding the claim that Southall overheard an attack on SE-BDY, I retain the assessment of the probative value of this information as being moderate.

(c) Interception and knowledge of Hammarskjöld’s travel arrangements

106. Between 2017 and 2022, in my successive reports I have analysed information that Hammarskjöld’s travel plans were not secret and were probably known in advance by officials, including of the United Kingdom, Northern Rhodesia, the United States, the Congo and Union Minière du Haut-Katanga (see, for example, 2022 report, sect. III.A.1 (c)). Because the travel arrangements for the Secretary-General’s mission to Ndola were known to more people than the early inquiries were aware of, flight SE-BDY could have been exposed to the possibility of planned hostile action while en route to Ndola.

107. No new information was received on this topic under the present mandate. Despite opportunities to do so, no Member State sought to clarify the findings of the 2022 report, on the basis of which I consider those findings to be strengthened. In 2022, I assessed that information to be of moderate probative value and I affirm that assessment.

(d) Interception and monitoring of communications

108. Between 2019 and 2022, in my successive reports I have analysed information that Member States were intercepting and monitoring communications in the relevant area in September 1961. This included United Nations communications that were intercepted by and intercepts that were shared with Northern Rhodesia, the United Kingdom, the United States and Union Minière du Haut-Katanga (see, for example, 2019 report, executive summary, sect. C.3).

109. As also analysed in previous reports, signals and intelligence agencies of certain Member States appear to have had the capacity to intercept and read encrypted communications sent to or by Hammarskjöld. Specifically, the United States, West Germany and potentially other Member States appear to have had covert and direct “backdoor” access that allowed them to intercept and decrypt messages transmitted from Hammarskjöld’s CX-52 cryptographic machine, as well as potentially the high-level communications of other United Nations officials, or similar communications transmitted within or among other Member States.

110. Information provided by the Independent Appointee of Germany, Fitschen, in 2024 related to his searches for information on this topic in German archives. He advised that the inquiry referred to in the 2022 report by a group of journalists regarding the sale of encryption technology, to which BND had contributed, focused on activities that had occurred after the crash of SE-BDY (see, for example, 2022 report, sect. III.A.1 (g)). Fitschen was officially informed that the search in German archives “did not reveal any indications that the BND has had access to the UN encryption system in the relevant period in the sense that the agency could have followed Hammarskjöld’s encrypted UN communication and/or that the BND could have gained any direct access to information concerning the details of Hammarskjöld trip to Ndola”. I am grateful to Fitschen for undertaking these searches.

111. In terms of the ability to monitor communications on the night of the crash, as observed in the 2022 report, British officials Lord Alport and Brian Unwin appear to have held a suspicion that United States Dakotas (a plane with model C-47, at times also referred to as DC-3) in Ndola may have heard but failed to report information about radio transmissions from SE-BDY, including after SE-BDY had lost contact with Ndola air traffic control. Larry Devlin, CIA Chief of Station in the Congo in September 1961, had also reported publicly that a United States air attaché in Ndola “had been in touch with the pilot [of SE-BDY] since ahead of time”.

112. A new analysis of documents that Simensen provided in 2023 indicates that a specific reason for the presence of United States Dakotas in and around Ndola from 16 September 1961 appears to have been to secure communications in the area. A telegram from the United States Ambassador to the Congo, Edmund Gullion, to the Secretary of State on that date refers to “AIRA [and] Pretoria aircraft C-47 currently also Elisabethville. Pretoria ALUSNA aircraft also believed Ndola. These last 3 aircraft standing by for evacuation Elisabethville and assure communications that area”. A subsequent cable of 18 September 1961 from Salisbury to the Secretary of State confirms that by the afternoon of 16 September 1961 two of the planes had arrived at Ndola. There were no evacuees. The information confirming that the purpose of the United States planes in Katanga and Ndola was for communications highlights the likelihood that communications records were likely to have been created from those planes. No such records have been disclosed.

113. In 2024, I asked the United States for logs or other lists of all communications made on 17 to 18 September 1961 whether to, from, or intercepted by its assets (including Dakota and C-54 aircraft). I did not receive a response to the request.

114. It is particularly important that any records of intercepted messages be disclosed by other Member States that may have had access to United Nations communications, in particular those that may refer to flight SE-BDY or the crash and subsequent inquiries.

115. I note that no Member State sought to clarify the findings in the 2022 report, on which basis I consider those findings to be strengthened. In 2022, I assessed information that Member States were monitoring communications and radio traffic to be of strong probative value and it to be highly likely that relevant records of those communications were created but have not been disclosed. I affirm that assessment.

(e) Tore Meijer

116. As noted above, Meijer was a Swedish instructor at the Ethiopian Air Force flying school who stated that he overheard a conversation on short-wave radio around midnight on the night of 17 to 18 September 1961. In 2022, I wrote to Ethiopia to request that specific searches be conducted for any information regarding a report that was apparently made by Meijer to the Head of the flying school in 1961. In 2024, I made similar requests for information to Ethiopia, which were not answered. This matter is flagged for future follow-up.

2. Possible involvement of mercenary pilots or other agents

117. New information was received between 2023 and 2024 regarding individuals who have been identified as possibly associated with a potential attack on SE-BDY. This information builds on that analysed in previous reports, including the known list of persons of interest who were in Katanga and Ndola around 17 to 18 September 1961. A formalized working list (in the form of a *dramatis personae*) was prepared in 2022 by graduate students of Trier University under the supervision of Professor Fröhlich.¹

(a) Persons of interest: general

118. As previously observed, the early inquiries mistakenly concluded that there was only one Katangan Avikat pilot who could have flown a plane in an attack against SE-BDY. This conclusion was apparently based on the evidence given by Major Delin of Avikat, whose account appears to have been misleading. I have previously assessed Delin's testimony as lacking credibility, including because it was separately established that Avikat had multiple serving pilots (see, for example, 2022 report, sect. III.A.3, and 2019 report, sects. III.A.4 and V.A.1).

119. Information discussed since the 2017 report has established that there were many more persons of interest, including pilots, than the early inquiries knew of. According to United Nations documents and documents from other sources analysed in 2019 and 2022, Avikat had at least 32 personnel (among whom were 14 pilots, in addition to radio operators and technicians) in January 1961, and at least 11 mercenary pilots at Kolwezi airfield alone in April 1962.

120. Mercenaries, including pilots, with varying degrees of flying ability present in and providing services to Katanga from late 1961 to early 1962 have been identified in documents considered in the 2019 and 2022 reports. According to this information, those mercenaries and other pilots included Bertaux, Boutet, Bracco, Browne, Cassart, Catchpole, Dagonnier, Delcors, Delin, Dubois, Fouquet, Gelen, Gheysels, Glaspole, Gurkitz, Hedges, Heuckets, Hislier, Hirsch, de Louigi, Lönne, Magain,

¹ This document is an example of the type of document recommended for publication in a dedicated online collection (see sect. V.B.4 below).

Mans, Melot, Osy, Pence, Pier, Pieret, Puren, de Radiques, Van Risseghem, Schäfer, de Stoute, Verloo, Volant, Wicksteed and others.²

121. Other mercenaries or other personnel considered in the 2019 and 2022 reports who were not specifically noted as being able to operate an aircraft included Adam, Badaire, Beuckels, de la Bourdonnaye, Bousquet, Charlot, Coitre, Cooper, Cremer, Crevecouer, Denard, Deshamps, Egé, Emeyriat, Faulques, Gillet, Gilson, Hambursen, Hetzlen, Hoare, Huyghe, Lamouline, Lasimone, Lebvebre, Lucien, Nguza, Paucheun, Pradier, Ropagnol, de Saint Paul, Saquet, Schnell, Swanepoel, de Troyer, Trinquier, Van Rooy, Van DeWalle, Van der Wegen, Vidal de Clary, Weber, Wrenacre and others.²

122. The new information analysed between 2017 and 2022 supports the finding that foreign mercenaries, including pilots, were a significant force in and around Katanga in September 1961, in a manner that was not understood or appreciated by the early inquiries. On this basis and to better understand the precise locations of individuals on the night of the crash, in 2024 I asked South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States for information on certain of the above individuals. I did not receive a response to these requests.

123. As described above, the Independent Appointee of Germany, Fitschen, continued to undertake research on specific topics and provided a report to me in April 2024. Much of this research related to the identity and location of specific individuals and is discussed below. In terms of general information about pilots in the service of Katanga, Fitschen provided new information from German archives noting a report of 20 September 1961 from the German Consulate General in Salisbury to headquarters, which analysed the position of Rhodesia, as conveyed by Rhodesian Prime Minister Welensky. That report stated that “even though there is no defense agreement and an official active support of Katanga by the [Rhodesian] Federation is impossible, it is, for example, not being denied that Rhodesian pilots are flying Katangese jet fighters”. A further report of 2 October 1961 from the German Consulate General in Salisbury to the Federal Foreign Office also forwarded information obtained from a “European fugitive”, stating that, notwithstanding the expulsion of mercenaries, Tshombe still had at that time “French, but also Dutch, Greek, Italian and Jewish specialists at his disposal”, who did not engage in the first line of combat but “operated special weapons”.

124. As a general concluding statement, it is without doubt that there were more persons of interest who were actively engaged in combat against the United Nations than had been considered by the early inquiries. I would retain my previous assessment of the information analysed in 2022 that there was more than one pilot in the armed forces of Katanga who could have flown an aircraft capable of offensive action on the night of 17 to 18 September 1961, as remaining of moderate probative value.

(b) Heinrich Schäfer

125. In April 2024, Fitschen provided new information about Heinrich Schäfer, a pilot who flew a Dornier DO-28 (marked KA-3016) that was ultimately delivered to Katanga in August 1961. Information about Schäfer was analysed in the 2019 and 2022 reports on the basis of documents provided by Gülstorff and Fitschen respectively.

126. As Fitschen observes, the present state of information does not permit it to be established whether Schäfer, accompanied by Cassart and flight mechanic Eugen, delivered the DO-28 to Brazzaville, stopping there, or whether he flew further.

² Multiple variants of the spelling of these names have been used in different documents.

Schäfer's personal flight log states that he flew DO-28 KA-3016 from Munich Riem airport in Germany on 21 August 1961 to land in "Brassaville" on 28 August 1961. Although Schäfer's personal flight log does not record another flight until 16 November 1961 in Munich, a separate flight log, "flight log no. 9", which is an official log bearing the company's air control stamp, records two flights by Schäfer in Germany on 2 September 1961, indicating that he returned to Germany following the delivery of the DO-28 plane, although the date and mode of his return is not clear.

127. There are no records that I have reviewed that establish what Schäfer did after landing in Brazzaville. It is possible, for example, that he returned to West Germany, or that he delivered the DO-28 to Katanga, or that he went onward to another location. However, as Fitschen notes, neither is it the case that other records and accounts appear to establish the presence of Schäfer in Katanga, which was at that time an area of active conflict. The further work, which included research in the Airbus archives (where Dornier archives are now located), did not show when the DO-28 was ultimately piloted onward from Brazzaville to its final destination of Katanga or by whom.

128. As noted in the 2022 report, Schäfer's flight logs suggest that he may have returned directly to Germany after delivering the DO-28, given that he recorded a flight in Germany on 2 September 1961. Fitschen undertook further research to establish the differences between and within the logs. Relevantly, in Schäfer's personal flight log, the first five pages record 149 flights between August 1958 and March 1960 in chronological order. However, the subsequent pages record flights in different categories. Relevantly, international assignments that Schäfer undertook in the DO-27 and DO-28 aircraft between August 1961 and October 1962 are arranged in a separate section of the log by geographical region and include the flight to Brazzaville in one section, and the flights in Greenland (discussed in the 2022 report at sect. III.A.3 (b)) between 21 and 26 September 1961 in another section. There are 42 short flights recorded by Schäfer on 21 September 1961 alone, 25 of them with passengers named Ziegler and Christensen, for the purpose of testing ski equipment for departures and landings under winter conditions.

129. After the Greenland flights, separate sections in Schäfer's log record flights on the DO-27 or DO-28 in Egypt, Libya, the Sudan, Uganda and "America" and, separately, on a Klemm 107 aircraft in Germany on 6 September 1961.

130. As noted in the 2022 report, there are some features of Schäfer's flight logs that leave unanswered questions. Primarily, the logs do not appear to have been created contemporaneously with the flights recorded in them, but it is not clear when the logs were created or what information they were based on. The non-contemporaneity is apparent from the fact that Schäfer's personal log (*Hauptflugbuch für Motorflug, Buch Nr. 1*) lists flights in non-chronological order. For example, flights in the "Khartoum" section from 1962 appear earlier in the log than those in the "Greenland" section in 1961, despite no blank spaces being left in the log between the sections.

131. This observation accords with information provided to Fitschen by Dornier (Airbus) archivist Ms. Nistl, stating that the main purpose of the logs was to record total flying time, as pilots had to fly a minimum quota of hours to retain their licence. Furthermore, pilots would often not take their log books on flights and would regularly ask others, such as the flight mechanic, to complete the log, which may explain the differences in handwriting in Schäfer's log book.

132. The preceding factors lean towards a finding that the flight logs are not incontrovertible proof of what they assert. However, absent other contrary information, they create a presumption that, if Schäfer's logs were accepted as accurate and/or if corroborating evidence such as immigration records can be found, his being present in Greenland on 21 September 1961 would make it unlikely that he

could have been in Ndola on 18 September 1961, given the great distance between those locations.

(c) Organisation Armée Secrète

133. In the 2022 report I analysed information provided by Picard regarding a letter and purported “death warrant”, which indicated on the front that it was sent to Hammarskjöld by the Organisation Armée Secrète (OAS) in July 1961. Picard located the document in the French National Archives in a folder entitled “SDECE – Premier ministre” and marked top secret, which was part of Jacques Foccart’s private collection. The envelope in which the letter had apparently been sent bears the address of the Secretary-General in New York and displays stamped French postal stamps with a postmark that indicates that it was sent in July 1961. Despite further searches, the original was not located in United Nations archives. From information provided by the Independent Appointee of France, Maurice Vaïsse, he had also reviewed the OAS document in 2018, but considered it an “orphan” document as no other references to it were located by him.

134. In terms of the content of the letter, it criticized Hammarskjöld in relation to action by the United Nations in the Bizerte crisis and alleged that Hammarskjöld had decided to support the Russians in the Congo. The letter concluded by stating that “the OAS committee has put you on trial and sentenced you to death. Here attached is the sentence. It will be executed, come what may”. Accompanying the letter was a further page, constituting the “death warrant”. It is titled with an OAS header and motto, “Honesty Justice Liberty”. The document states that the executive committee, having on that day in Paris heard the account of Hammarskjöld’s purported support for Bourguiba (the President of Tunisia), had decided “to issue a death warrant this day upon Mister Dag Hammarskjöld Secretary General of the United Nations”. It stated that “this sentence common to justice and fairness will be executed as soon as possible” and is marked “Paris the [date blank] July 1961, the President General [name illegible]”.

135. Among other observations, Picard noted that OAS had links in Katanga, including through the presence of Faulques, who had been a higher ranked officer in the same Foreign Legion regiment (1ere REP) as Pierre Sergeant. On this topic it is also recalled that, as analysed in 2019, CIA Chief of Station in the Congo, Larry Devlin, stated that some of the more competent mercenary officers of Katanga came from France and that “Jacques Foccart, the head of French intelligence for Africa in the Elysée Palace in Paris, offered some of [the mercenaries] an eventual pardon if they would fight for Tshombe in Katanga”. Bengt Rösiö had also noted in his 1994 report that several French mercenaries were unable to return to France because of their participation in the OAS in Algeria; he did not, however, specify those individuals’ identities.

136. In the 2022 report, I noted that there were several other records in United Nations archives that referred to assassination attempts against United Nations officials in the Congo. Among these records, mercenaries led by Roger Faulques had, according to information provided to ONUC in September 1961, circulated a “liquidation” list of ONUC officials. Picard also noted that United Nations archives refer to a letter from O’Brien to ONUC official Sture Linnér stating that on 28 August 1961 OAS in Katanga had issued United Nations official Michel Tombelaine with a 48-hour ultimatum to depart Katanga.

137. In 2023, Picard provided new information that developed the topic of the OAS “death warrant”. In summary, that information referred to a separate, unrelated letter and another “death warrant” (together in a one-page document) that appeared to have been issued on 26 August 1961 to Enrico Mattei, then the CEO of the Italian oil

company Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi (ENI). Mattei was a public administrator and businessman who had become head of the Italian oil company ENI in the 1950s. ENI was expanding at that time into petroleum exploration in North Africa and other regions.

138. Like the letter and “death warrant” against Hammarskjöld, the one against Mattei referred to his alleged support of Bourguiba (the Tunisian nationalist leader and its first President following its independence), as well as other “anti-French” activities in East and North Africa related to petroleum. The bottom part of the page stated that “Commandatore Mattei and his family” were considered hostage and condemned to death, but indicated that the decision could be suspended if Mattei discontinued his activities.

139. The copy provided by Picard appears to be a facsimile. A date on the letter appears to be a stamp; it is unclear, but seems to read “26 Aug 1961”. A separate stamp on the bottom of the letter states “Archivio G. La Pira”, possibly indicating that the letter was stored at some time in the archives of Giorgio La Pira, former Mayor of Florence and a public figure.

140. Regarding Mattei, on 27 October 1962 the plane in which he and his party were travelling between Sicily and Milan crashed, with no survivors. The circumstances of the crash appear to have been the subject of controversy in Italy: the official cause of the crash was noted to be an accident, although theories and purported evidence of sabotage have also been described in public sources. Based on these facts, Picard noted similarities between the crash of flight SE-BDY and the crash that killed Mattei, for which reason he brought the information to my attention.

141. Picard also observed that, according to a 1972 article published in *L'Europeo*, Dutch-American author Sam Waagenaar had interviewed Mattei one week before Mattei's death. Mattei stated he had been threatened by OAS, after which he had contacted Italian counter-espionage authorities. Apparently, Mattei was told that he was not the only one being threatened by OAS; so too had Hammarskjöld been.

142. Picard noted that the purported letters to Hammarskjöld and Mattei show similar style, form and syntax. He also observed that both Hammarskjöld and Mattei had been described to be acting contrary to former colonial interests in Africa in 1961, which would provide a reason for animus from OAS against each of them.

143. Further to the new information provided by Picard, in 2024 I wrote to Italy to ask that searches be conducted of official records and archives, including those of intelligence, security and defence archives, for information of potential relevance to this inquiry. Although Italy had been written to formally in general terms in 2015 and 2018 (as had all Member States), this was the first approach to Italy for specific information.

144. I requested that Italy conduct general searches for any records and archives referring to the crash of SE-BDY on 17 to 18 September 1961, relevant communications and references to investigations or subsequent reports that followed the crash, whether internal, public or emanating from non-Italian sources. Noting the matters raised by Picard, I enclosed copies of the purported “death warrant” letters to Hammarskjöld and Mattei and requested Italy to search for information referring to those letters, including to verify whether Mattei had been notified of the purported OAS threat, and for other information, including resulting from any Italian inquiries, relating to the activities of OAS in 1961.

145. I had not received a substantive response from Italy to my queries at the time of writing the present report. However, I was grateful to receive confirmation from representatives of Italy that searches remained in process. In meetings with the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations a suggestion was discussed that it

might be beneficial for further guidance to be provided directly to those conducting searches in Italy, to assist in the search process.

146. The new information provided by Picard provides context for the purported “death warrant” against Hammarskjöld and generates further lines of enquiry. Although there is at present no specific evidence linking OAS or its members to the crash of SE-BDY, their presence in and around Katanga at the relevant time and the death threats that they made against United Nations personnel are established by written records. At present, it is not possible to make a thorough assessment of the new information provided by Picard. However, it is obviously a matter of importance that should be followed up, subject to a response being received from Italy. In this regard, I flag it as a matter for future consideration.

3. Possible type of aircraft and operating airfields

147. The early inquiries noted that an Avikat Fouga Magister jet that was operational in September 1961 had caused significant losses to ONUC forces in hostilities. That Fouga jet was considered to be a candidate for a role in an attack on SE-BDY. However, the early inquiries did not conclusively establish the number of such aircraft (if more than one), the identity of individuals who could pilot them or where they were operated from, or other aircraft that might have been used in an attack.

148. The early enquiries did not have comprehensive information about potential hostile actors. For example, Delin was the only Avikat pilot from whom evidence was sought by the early inquiries and, when he stated that he had not been involved in any incident, he was believed. It was also stated that Kolwezi was the only available airfield. However, information obtained since indicates that many pilots and locations were available to Avikat, in both Katanga and Northern Rhodesia. Some of these additional airfields, many of which were closer to Ndola than Kolwezi, were shown in a map that was provided as an annex to the 2017 report.

149. In the 2019 and 2022 reports, I described new information under this heading, including regarding Fouga Magister, Dornier DO-28, Dove and other aircraft that had been weaponized, as well as airfields that were used by Avikat in both Katanga and Northern Rhodesia. Between 2023 and 2024, I received further information on the possible type of aircraft from several sources, as described below.

(a) Fouga Magister

150. In the 2022 report, I analysed new information that supported a finding that the Fouga Magister with registration KAT-93 was the sole Fouga that remained in use by Avikat in September 1961, including in multiple attacks against ONUC, after the other two Fougas delivered in 1961 had been rendered inoperative. Photographs provided by researcher Rosato appeared to show KAT-93 and several “dummy” aircraft at Kolwezi on 24 September 1961, with one of the photographs possibly depicting Jan Van Risseghem. A technical analysis of potential maximum flight time supported the theory that the Fouga could have been used on 17 to 18 September 1961 for a return combat mission from Kolwezi to Ndola. In addition, recalling previous analysis, it was noted that the Fouga appeared to also be used for night combat missions (see 2022 report, sect. III.A.4, and 2019 report, sect. III.A.5), and could have been flown to or from an airfield that was closer to Ndola than Kolwezi.

151. Information provided by Fitschen in 2024 corroborated the information analysed in 2022. Based on a report dated 2 October 1961 from the German Consulate General in Salisbury to the Federal Foreign Office, German records indicate that of 12 Fougas ordered by Katanga, three had been delivered in 1961, but by October that year only one remained in operation. That Fouga was “being dispatched ... from the Kolwezi airbase and was operated by a South African pilot”.

152. As was observed in the 2019 and 2022 reports, the balance of evidence appears aligned with the proposition that by September 1961 only one Fouga Magister (KAT-93) remained in use by Avikat. However, various other aircraft were designed or modified for combat and were operational in the area. Available evidence also indicates that the Fouga could be operated at night and that it was used in air-to-air attacks.

153. As previously observed, it would have been very difficult for the Fouga to perform night missions or engage in air-to-air harassment or attack. While it would have been possible for a Fouga to have threatened or attacked SE-BDY, this does not establish that a Fouga was actually used to carry out an attack on SE-BDY. As previously, I retain the assessment that the information regarding the presence and operations of the Fouga aircraft in Katanga in September 1961 is of moderate probative value.

(b) Dornier

154. The Independent Panel received information from Gülstorff in 2015 regarding the presence in Katanga of Dornier DO-27 and DO-28 aircraft, and the possibility that one or more may have been involved in an attack on SE-BDY. Based on information analysed since, including that provided by Gülstorff, Belgium, Germany and Picard, it appears to be established that Dornier DO-28 aircraft were supplied on a commercial basis to Katanga from West Germany in 1961. Furthermore, it appears to be established that at least one of the aircraft was present before 17 to 18 September 1961 (registered as KA-3016), that the aircraft was used by Avikat over a wide geographical range in and around Katanga and Northern Rhodesia and that the aircraft may have been modified for aerial attacks (including intercepts) and bombings, including at night (see 2019 report, sect. III.A.5).

155. In terms of operational capacity, information analysed in 2019 and 2022 showed that the DO-28 had excellent manoeuvrability and was a “STOL” plane (short take-off and landing), able to take off and land on an airstrip of less than 300 m in length. This increased the number of potential airfields or even rudimentary landing strips that it may have taken off from or landed at. Places where the Dornier aircraft were located included an airstrip at Kipushi in Northern Rhodesia and they were apparently operated with Rhodesian knowledge, with operations that were said to involve the transport of Katangan weapons and personnel.

156. Further new information regarding the pilot Schäfer is considered below. As observed in the 2022 report, I note again that the information analysed shows only that it may have been possible for a Dornier to have threatened or attacked SE-BDY, rather than that a Dornier was actually used to carry out an attack on SE-BDY. I have previously assessed the information regarding the presence and operations of Dornier aircraft in Katanga in September 1961 as being of moderate probative value and maintain that assessment.

4. Records of the Rhodesian Federation

157. In the 2019 and 2022 reports, I concluded that additional important information may have been recorded in records and archives of the Rhodesian Federation.

158. Among other topics, the reports included analysis of new information from an individual researcher and the Bodleian Library of Oxford University in the United Kingdom regarding the potential that ground forces may have directly attacked SE-BDY, or sought to reach the wreck immediately after its crash (see 2022 report, sect. III.A.4, and 2019 report, sect. IV.B.2).

159. I did not make a specific assessment of the probative value of that information. However, I noted, in particular, that in his memoirs Walter Flett Faulds, a Captain and military intelligence officer in the Royal Rhodesian Regiment, had described his involvement with British Intelligence (MI5) and CIA around 1961, and had spoken about events on the night of the plane crash. Faulds did not give evidence before the early inquiries, but he might have visited the crash site before its official discovery and might have had knowledge of a tape recording that was made in the Ndola air traffic control tower but was never disclosed. He also suggested in his memoirs that another military intelligence officer (who was a Rhodesian forester and who might have been Malcolm Burnes, a Northern Rhodesian senior forestry officer), might have been a witness to relevant events.

160. Relatedly, I also analysed in the 2022 report information regarding Katangan attempts to obtain military assistance from Rhodesia, the relatively free movement of equipment over the Northern Rhodesian-Katangan border, and some degree of at least tacit cooperation between Katangan and Northern Rhodesian authorities concerning military matters. I noted that any Rhodesian support to Katanga before the crash of SE-BDY was a significant matter that warranted enquiry, including in Rhodesian military records.

161. Accordingly, in the 2022 report I noted that the Rhodesian migrated records, including those of the Rhodesian Special Branch and the Rhodesian Army Headquarters to which Faulds was reporting, are an important potential source of information and their identification and disclosure was urged of the United Kingdom.

162. Following up on this matter, in 2024 I requested confirmation from the United Kingdom regarding which Rhodesian Federation archives had been searched and the results of those searches. I did not receive a specific response to my request, for which reason this important line of enquiry remains outstanding.

B. Sabotage: Operation Celeste/South African Institute for Maritime Research

163. Since the 2015 work of the Independent Panel, under each mandate new information on the subject of Operation Celeste has been analysed. Documents initially investigated by Williams with the letterhead of an organization named the South African Institute for Maritime Research (SAIMR) describe its agents planning and carrying out a plot named Operation Celeste, the purpose of which was to “remove” Hammarskjöld by sabotaging flight SE-BDY.

164. The SAIMR documents initially came to public attention in the late 1990s during the work of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In 2016, South Africa indicated that documents related to the matter had been kept in its archives, but these documents have not been located. Accordingly, I have not been able to access the original documents, or copies of them, within South Africa. I also requested the United Kingdom and the United States to conduct searches for relevant information, without result.

165. In the 2019 report, I analysed new information regarding SAIMR from the *Cold Case Hammarskjöld* film team, who had conducted significant research into its existence and located a handwritten and seemingly comprehensive version of the memoirs of purported SAIMR head Keith Maxwell-Annandale. In the 2022 report, I further analysed new information from Rosato arising from the research into details about SAIMR, based on the Operation Celeste documents and SAIMR and its personnel, including Wagner and Maxwell.

166. As observed in the 2022 report, presently available information indicates that while the organization SAIMR existed in the 1980s and 1990s, it was unclear whether it existed in the 1960s. I noted that it remained necessary to obtain further information in order to verify or dispel the hypothesis relating to Operation Celeste and for any conclusion to be reached regarding the sabotage hypothesis. In this regard, in 2024 I requested information from South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States about SAIMR. I did not receive specific responses to my requests. I again note this as an important matter that requires follow-up.

C. Human (pilot) error

167. Despite the considerable experience and professionalism of the pilots and crew of flight SE-BDY, the possibility that the crash could have been the product of an unintentional error by the pilots has not been excluded. Given that there is no evidence of mechanical, structural or material failures, any such error may have resulted from a combination of the pilots misreading the instruments on approach and/or not being able to see the ground.

168. The possibility of unintentional error (a crash that occurred without any other form of interference) has been neither established nor ruled out since the United Nations reopened this matter in 2015. Since that time, new information and analyses of factors relevant to a hypothesis concerning pilot error have been considered. This has included an examination of the potential role of crew fatigue or other physiological effects, as well as an application of modern aircraft crash analysis methodology.

169. The 2022 report considered new and extensive analysis that was conducted respectively by Joseph Majerle, an aircraft mechanic and pilot in the United States, and Sven Hammarberg, a former accident investigator and former fighter pilot in Sweden, who previously assisted the Hammarskjöld Commission, the Independent Panel and the Eminent Person (2022 report, sect. III.C). The opinions reached by both experts followed a review of material, including the reports of the early inquiries, as well as the testimony and technical appendices that were put before them.

170. Majerle's opinion was that several factors suggested that the pilots of SE-BDY made an intentional landing attempt at the location of the crash, including: (a) that the aircraft was in a landing configuration further from the airport than it should have been; (b) that the aircraft was travelling at a lower speed than the Rhodesian Board considered (likely less than 140 knots and perhaps as low as 80 knots) when it came into contact with the treetops; (c) that, based on his analysis of propeller blades and related matters (which analysis was not exactly and meticulously done by the early inquiries), SE-BDY had significant reverse thrust engaged while airborne; and (d) that the length of the swathe cut in the trees and the distribution of the wreckage show minimal displacement, highlighting low impact speed. Majerle considered it likely that some sort of precipitating event (such as an inflight explosion and/or fire) resulted in the pilots attempting to make an intentional voluntary forced landing.

171. To examine Majerle's revised submission of June 2022, I sought Hammarberg's opinion, under significant time pressure. I was very grateful for the high degree of professionalism and assistance that he again provided, as he had on numerous occasions before, which included seeking the expertise of Captain Gibson, an experienced Transair pilot who served in the Congo in the 1960s. Hammarberg, having consulted with Gibson, provided a responsive opinion to Majerle's submission, stating relevantly that it was compliant with policy for SE-BDY to have deployed the aircraft's landing configuration at some distance from the airport. Hammarberg considered that although it may have been possible to engage reverse

thrust before landing, the evidence did not favour such a suggestion in view of the angle of descent and the swathe cut into the trees before SE-BDY made contact with the ground, which indications provided evidence of a “controlled flight into terrain” (CFIT). Notably, the definition of CFIT does not exclude external hostile action (see Hammarskjöld Commission report, para. 7.15 ff.). Hammarberg also noted complexities and challenges in drawing firm conclusions based primarily on an analysis of photographs of the appearance and location of aircraft parts or propellor positions following a crash.

172. The analysis of both Majerle and Hammarberg underscored that, as found by the early inquiries, SE-BDY’s procedure turn and the part of its descent prior to its crash appear to have been made in a generally controlled manner, based on the physical evidence, including the markings in the trees and the wreckage distribution. As remarked by Hammarberg and noted by the early inquiries, the fact that SE-BDY was found with its undercarriage locked and wing flaps deployed in landing configuration indicates in the circumstances that its pilots were acting competently and in accordance with established policy for an instrument procedure approach. Regarding the speed at which SE-BDY may have been travelling at the point of impact, the early inquiries and the simulated flights taken as part of the investigations of the Rhodesian Board did appear to have considered a range of speeds.

173. In view of the divergence in aspects of the opinions of Majerle and Hammarberg, and noting the limited time that had been available for the latter’s analysis, under the present mandate I sought the performance of a technical analysis by a further independent expert who had not previously been involved in this matter. Noting the encouragement of the General Assembly in resolution [77/252](#) of Member States to voluntarily make assistance available to me for specific tasks, in 2023 I requested and was grateful to receive assistance through the Defence Research Agency (FOI) of Sweden to identify an independent expert with appropriate experience.

174. I was put in contact with a retired flight captain, accident investigator, chief pilot and flight safety inspector with a doctorate degree in mechanical engineering, Roland Karlsson. As an experienced pilot, Karlsson was rated to fly various aircraft, including DC-3, Convair 330/340 Metropolitan, Fokker F28, Boeing 737NG, Airbus 321 and several twin turboprop and piston engine FAR 23 airplanes. Over the course of our interactions, Karlsson provided me with several comprehensive reports, a briefing and responses to follow-up queries. I reviewed this information in detail and have benefited greatly from being able to access the significant expertise of Karlsson, who has been collegial, comprehensive and able to explain challenging technical concepts in a nuanced and clear manner.

175. In seeking both general observations and more specific analysis of the areas of distinction between the opinions of Majerle and Hammarberg, I provided Karlsson with the 1961 and 1962 Rhodesian and United Nations Commission reports, my 2022 report and other information. He also undertook an independent analysis of other reports and material.

176. In terms of areas of commonality, the early enquiries, Majerle, Hammarberg and Karlsson all appear to agree that the pilots and crew of SE-BDY were collectively experienced in approach and landings under day and night conditions, including in unfamiliar locations. In respect of the specific approach to Ndola airport, their respective opinions also appear broadly to conclude that on reaching the location and sighting the airfield, SE-BDY commenced an instrument approach that constituted a procedure turn and the subsequent commencement of a controlled descent towards the Ndola airport runway, as would be anticipated in the circumstances.

177. I requested that Karlsson analyse specific matters regarding the opinions of Majerle and Hammarberg, including whether additional conclusions could be reached

regarding the velocity of the aircraft at the time of impact, whether reverse thrust may have been engaged prior to contact with the treetops and whether the technical analyses permitted any conclusions to be drawn regarding whether the flight may have been intentionally or unintentionally brought down where it was.

178. As to the configuration of the aircraft and its likely velocity, Karlsson considered that SE-BDY had commenced preparation for landing at the time of impact. He stated that the landing gear was lowered and the flap settings were established to be at 30 degrees, which appeared to be correct for the required configuration at that stage of the approach. A setting of 30 degrees would be possible but not probable as a final landing setting, compared with a final setting of around 50 degrees. At such a setting the speed would be reduced to 110 knots, although the parameters were flexible and up to the discretion of the captain in any specific case.

179. At impact the plane's landing lights were not extended; Karlsson was unclear whether this was standard Transair procedure, or an attempt for the plane to remain unseen for as long as possible. Karlsson had sourced a copy of the DC-6B "before landing checklist" from 1963. The checklist had around 26 items to be completed, split into stages of before and after "gear down and locked". The checklist called for many items to be completed by the flight engineer and the pilot, which did not appear to have been done in the case of SE-BDY. By way of example, more than half of the passengers did not appear from the wreckage and medical analysis to have had seat belts on at the time of the crash, as would usually follow the seat belt light being turned on before landing. Although various other circumstances may have explained this, it was an example of the usual final landing approach procedures not having been completed at the time of impact.

180. Regarding the probable velocity, Karlsson noted that the maximum speed was 165 knots for gear and flap extensions of 0–30 degrees, with the operation manual calling for a speed of around 130–140 knots on an instrument approach. Karlsson assumed an actual aircraft mass of 45,000 kg (maximum take-off mass was about 48,570 kg), which would have given a pressure-corrected stall speed with gear down and flaps at 30 degrees of an estimated 95 knots, noting the low thrust and pressure altitude. Karlsson thus estimated that SE-BDY was travelling at around 110–130 knots at the time of the crash.

181. As to whether reverse thrust may have been engaged, Karlsson noted that this was not ordinarily possible in an airborne DC-6B in the configuration that existed in 1961, as the reverse function could only be engaged when the main gear struts were compressed.³ Engaging reverse thrust required a lever on the pedestal to be released, then the power lever to be mechanically pushed downwards beyond the closed position to increase the engine power above idle before the reverse thrust was achieved. Moreover, for this to occur the landing gear needed to be compressed against the ground through a "ground flight switch", which ordinarily occurred via the pressure of the plane being on the ground with landing gear extended. While it would have been possible to avoid this safety function by disrupting the circuit breaker at the flight engineer's station in the cockpit, such intentional action was not likely. Furthermore, the photographs of the wreckage indicated that there was low forward thrust in the engines (as opposed to strong reverse thrust) at the point of contact, which was not consistent with reverse thrust having been engaged.

182. In view of Majerle's hypothesis, I requested Karlsson to express an opinion regarding whether the angle of the propellor blades could give an indication of the potential for reverse thrust to have been engaged, as this was a key aspect of that

³ The earlier 1951–1959 DC-6 manual indicating reverse thrust to be possible had been superseded.

hypothesis. On engine number 4, Karlsson described the sharp-eyed observation made by Majerle that one blade was angled differently. However, Karlsson considered this to be a pitch angle resembling a feathered position that likely resulted from the application of force (internal or impact) or electrical signals to that blade, rather than reverse thrust. He based this in part on consideration of post-crash phenomena as outlined in the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) *Manual of Accident Investigation*. Furthermore, if only one of the four engines was generating reverse thrust, the aircraft would have been subject to a sudden yaw movement and a shift of heading and bank angle would have been evident in the aircraft's track before the crash, which was not the case based on the swathe cut in the trees. In all, each of the four engines of SE-BDY had a propeller, with three blades.

183. As to whether an intentional field landing attempt may have been made (i.e. an emergency landing away from an airport runway), Karlsson did not consider that indicators of such an event were present. Had an emergency landing attempt been made, in addition to possible advance radio communications about it, a "pitch up" position of the aircraft body may have been evident from a specific pattern in the trees. This would have resulted from the nose being raised to a slightly positive body angle for "floating". Furthermore, the flaps would be at 50 degrees, the flight path angle and rate of descent would be near zero, and the aircraft could have been expected to have remained at a higher speed. These indications were not present. In addition, the landing lights would likely have been extended and on. However, the wings' landing lights were found retracted and unlit, which (absent an emergency landing attempt) would not be surprising, as it was common to delay the extension of the landing lights until all items were completed before landing in darkness, especially in hazy conditions. The lack of landing lights meant that the trees and ground would not have been visible.

184. As to general observations regarding the early enquiries, Karlsson conducted a review of the full reports and appendices. In general, he considered that the Rhodesian Board's technical analysis that related to aviation matters (as opposed to, for example, the Board's overall analysis of the circumstances) was competent and of an appropriate standard. The procedures followed the guidelines in the ICAO *Manual of Aircraft Accident Investigation*, 3rd Edition (1959), which Karlsson reviewed. At the same time, there was some deficiency in respect of the analysis of flight preparation and human factors, and important information such as the technical logbook, flight manual, Transair operational handbook and final lever and switch positions could not be analysed because of the extent of the burning of the wreck. Karlsson considered that the plane's remains should perhaps have been kept longer before being melted or buried in the ground, to permit more analysis.

185. Other matters such as crew hierarchy may have been important to consider but were not analysed by the early enquiries. In this regard, Karlsson noted that in 1961 there may have been a barrier for lower-ranking crew members to question the decisions of the captain, or a barrier between militarily trained crew (as the two senior pilots were), as opposed to civilian trained (as the co-pilot was).

186. Karlsson also provided other instructive guidance, with images and charts as references. Among other things, he noted that difficulties in reading the type of three-point altimeter that the DC-6B used had resulted in many CFIT accidents, and that the cockpit of the plane was visually complex and particularly difficult to navigate under sparsely lit conditions at night. Furthermore, the security measures adopted by SE-BDY, which included using an uncommon route and attempting to avoid detection by declining to file a flight plan, meant that its actions would have been more difficult to predict or follow.

187. In response to my queries regarding whether it was possible to state conclusively whether an instrument, visual or mixed approach was used by SE-BDY, Karlsson provided helpful clarifications. He noted that the wide turn approach pattern was consistent with an instrument approach being made in accordance with the Jeppesen approach chart for Ndola, using the non-directional radio beacon ND. The bearing and distance were essentially correct for the usual instrument approach to Ndola, albeit the plane was too low. As the initial Rhodesian Board established, the approach chart for Ndola had been removed from the Jeppesen Route Manual, indicating that the captain of SE-BDY had it placed in his chart holder and almost certainly used the correct chart. It was not revealed if the other two pilots had a separate Ndola chart; although three United States Air Force maps were also found in the wreckage, they were not for Ndola.

188. Karlsson noted that many aircraft accidents have occurred where the crew mixed instrument and visual procedures and visual cues were lost, or attention to altitude and speed was inadequate. Although SE-BDY had, in Karlsson's opinion, clearly undertaken an instrument approach in line with the prevailing policy, it may nonetheless have been possible for the pilots to have changed to relying on visual references and taken an unsafe glide path without reverting to their instruments.

189. Karlsson observed that no available record existed of SE-BDY reporting to Ndola air traffic control at 6,000 feet, as it was supposed to do. Karlsson considered it to be unclear why SE-BDY would have asked for a barometric confirmation (QNH) only 3–5 minutes before the crash at 2210 hours.

190. Karlsson did not rule out an attack scenario but noted the difficulties that would have been faced by a possible attacker at night, in view of the limitations on equipment in that era. He also observed that if an attack had been mounted, authorities in the area, including Ndola air traffic control, the United States Dakotas or the crew of Lord Lansdowne's flight OO-RIC, may have been expected to have specifically observed indications of the attack. Regardless of whether an actual attack occurred, fear of being attacked might have aggravated the situation and caused lack of awareness and attention to basic flight parameters.

191. As noted, I am grateful for the comprehensive analyses conducted by each of Majerle, Hammarberg and Karlsson. Their insights have facilitated a very constructive dialectical process of consideration, contradiction and reconsideration of existing material and evolving hypotheses. Particularly because human error may be the default explanation if all other potential causes of the crash are ruled out, it is important that the hypothesis be tested from various angles, including by experts with significant personal experience in the specific type of aviation.

192. I note that in view of limitations of time, I have not sought the additional views of Majerle, Hammarberg or others on the conclusions reached by Karlsson. For completeness, it would be beneficial for such an opportunity to be afforded.

193. As noted in the 2022 report, the current state of the physical evidence does not appear to make it possible to conclusively indicate whether, when SE-BDY hit the treetops and then the ground, it did so because of a voluntary or an unintentional act of the pilots. Should more information be presented on this topic, continued examination and assessment would be warranted.

IV. Other new information

194. Adopting the structure used in the 2022 report, the present section consolidates information regarding acts of local and foreign authorities, including acts of officials and intelligence agencies. As such, it contains an analysis of new information that is

relevant to the context of the crash, but that does not go directly to its causes. As was the case in both 2019 and 2022, significant new information has been received that confirms the active presence of foreign intelligence operatives in the region at the relevant time, together with other information relevant to the context and surrounding events of 1961. Again, this remains an important area to be followed up on because it identifies where additional key information may be found and again supports the conclusion that Member States have not yet made full disclosure of important records.

A. Acts of local and foreign authorities

1. Foreign agencies

195. The early inquiries did not mention the presence of or consider that information might be available through the records of foreign intelligence personnel and agencies. However, information that has come to light since shows that there was a significant presence of intelligence personnel and agencies in and around Katanga in 1961. In addition to mercenaries and paramilitary personnel, there were significant active intelligence operations, which were designed precisely for the purpose of gathering information. The fact that they were not explored as potential repositories of information resulted in key sources not being utilized. As Eminent Person, I have sought access to information created or held by these institutions and personnel.

196. Despite opportunities to do so, no Member State other than Germany sought to clarify the findings of the 2022 report in respect of the presence of intelligence personnel and agencies. Accordingly, other than as indicated below, I consider the findings of the 2022 report to be strengthened.

197. Information on this topic analysed between 2023 and 2024 is described below.

(a) United Kingdom

198. As analysed previously, the United Kingdom had a significant intelligence presence in and around the Congo in 1961 (see, for example, 2022 report (sect. IV.A.1)). Of particular note is the role played by Neil Ritchie, a confirmed agent of the British Secret Intelligence Services (MI6) who operated under cover as First Secretary at the British High Commission in Salisbury. Ritchie was centrally involved in events leading up to the plane crash. He personally made the arrangements in September 1961 for the meeting in Ndola with Tshombe to which Hammarskjöld and his party were travelling when SE-BDY crashed, with the participation of the British Consul in Katanga, Denzil Dunnett, and the British High Commissioner in Salisbury, Lord Alport. The early inquiries were not aware of the scope of the involvement of British diplomatic and intelligence officials in setting up the arrangements for the meeting between Hammarskjöld and Tshombe.

199. The central nature of Ritchie's involvement included not only making arrangements for the meeting, but also facilitating it and then being centrally involved in matters after the plane had crashed. The day before the crash, Ritchie had collected Tshombe, Dunnett and Fortemps (assistant director general of Union Minière du Haut-Katanga) from Kipushi, Katanga, to travel over the border with Northern Rhodesia to Ndola. Ritchie was thus instrumental in coordination matters among the Head of State of Katanga, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and Union Minière, the company that was financing Katanga's secession and the payroll of the mercenaries that were in active conflict against the United Nations.

200. Significant new information received from Picard and Rocksén obtained primarily from various private archives was analysed in the 2022 report (sect. IV.A.1). These documents show continued interactions between officials of Katanga

(including Tshombe), the Rhodesian Federation, the United Kingdom and Union Minière du Haut-Katanga regarding the affairs of Katanga, and support being given to Katanga in its efforts against the United Nations. That documentation shows the extent to which a number of key personalities acting for or on behalf of the British, Rhodesian and Katangan Governments, and other commercial interests, including Union Minière, Anglo American and Rhopower, were engaged in and had a complete picture and knowledge of the events in the days leading up to and after the plane crash.

201. In 2024, I wrote to the United Kingdom to request a full list of records created by or referring to specified British officials that refer to information about the crash of the Secretary-General's plane. I also requested a full list of any British inquiries, formal or otherwise, including a summary of their conclusions, regarding the crash. If it was the case that the United Kingdom never made any investigations or informal inquiries of its own regarding the plane crash, I requested confirmation of this. As discussed above (sect. II.B), no substantive response to my specific queries was received.

(b) United States

202. As previously discussed, various pieces of information establish the active presence of United States intelligence, security and defence agencies and personnel in and around the Congo in 1961. This includes the information from Abram, Devlin, Doyle, Southall and others described above, as well as public reports in the United States, including the "Church Committee reports" of and related to the United States Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, 1975–1976, interim report on Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders.

203. In 2019 and 2022, new information was analysed that showed the presence of significant CIA personnel and operations in and around the Congo in 1961 (see 2022 report, sect. IV.A.1, and 2019 report, sects. III.A.4 and IV.A.1).

204. Information provided by Simensen in 2024 included a report of 25 September 1961 from Colonel Matlick, United States Air Attaché in Leopoldville. The report was subsequently forwarded by Wing Commander Cogill, British Air Attaché in Leopoldville, to the United Kingdom Air Ministry. Among other things, Matlick's report refers to being present in Ndola in the days after the crash. With ONUC Colonel Egge, Matlick identified several mercenaries who had served in Katanga, including a "South African Captain Puren" (presumably Jerry Puren), Ngosa, a "Swedish Captain", and others. Puren apparently sought to return to Katanga in a Piper Cub located in Ndola. Five or six of these individuals were identified by Egge by sight and many others were identified by Matlick through Katangan emblems on their jackets. Matlick also located a contract between Belgian mercenary Andre Pierlot and the Katangan air force.

205. As noted in the 2022 report, Puren has stated that he was at Ndola airport on 17 September 1961 with two other mercenaries (Gurkitz and Glaspole) and that at least two additional mercenaries were in Ndola town (Huyghe and Browne). The information from Simensen indicates that Matlick's report identified and advised the United States and the United Kingdom of the presence of additional mercenaries in Ndola immediately after the crash.

206. In 2024 I wrote to the United States to request, among other things, a full list of records created by or referring to specified United States military agencies and officials that refer to information about the crash of the Secretary-General's plane. I also requested a full list of any United States inquiries, formal or otherwise, including a summary of their conclusions, regarding the crash. If it was the case that the United

States never made any of its own investigations or informal inquiries regarding the plane crash, I requested confirmation of this. As discussed in section II.B above, no substantive response to my specific queries was received.

(c) Germany

207. As described in the 2022 and 2019 reports, I received information from Gülstorff and the Independent Appointee of Germany regarding the presence of agents of the West German intelligence service (BND) in and around the Congo in 1961 (see 2022 report, sect. IV.A.1, and 2019 report, sect. IV.A.1).

208. According to information provided by Gülstorff and analysed in the 2022 report, BND had established an official residence in Leopoldville and was engaged in various projects in the Congo in the early 1960s. The official residence was said to have personnel including, among others, Robert Whissel van Deventer, at Leopoldville University, Kurt Büttner, also known as Bocholt, an intelligence adviser, and Hans Germani, said to be a BND agent.

209. Fitschen, the Independent Appointee of Germany, provided new information in 2024 on the BND presence in the Congo. He advised that “upon independence of the Congo and a number of other countries in the area as of 1960, the [West German] Government decided to establish relations with members of governments and institutions of the newly independent States, including through offers of support and setting up a BND presence for the purpose of connecting to local officials and politicians and reporting thereon”. The permanently staffed BND office (Residentur) in Leopoldville was not established until 1962; Fitschen’s search for reports from a BND representative in Leopoldville in 1961 did not identify such information.

210. In relation to certain individuals identified by Gülstorff, BND confirmed that Bocholt was the code name of Kurt Büttner (born 1911), who was a BND employee from September 1960 to March 1976. According to an internal document, he left for a posting in Togo on 18 March 1962. Whissel van Deventer was the code name of Robert Whisel Wybrands-Marcussen (born 1913), who was a BND employee from November 1960 to March 1972. According to an internal record dated 13 July 1961, he was being trained in June 1961 for future reporting duties and it was planned in 1961 to send him to the Congo for a four-week training course (date to be determined), which posting he took up in May 1962. No reference to an individual named “Lönne” was found in BND or other archives.

211. In terms of specific BND-related projects in the Congo, according to information provided by Gülstorff in 2022, BND and CIA were involved in a project to establish a Congolese air force flight school. German aircraft and training personnel were said to be involved, including a “Mr. Meister”, also known as Colonel Stahl, who, according to a CIA file, was Wolf Meister, born 12 May 1933 in Bonn. A “Colonel Stein” and the BND President, Gehlen, were also stated to be involved in the operation.

212. In 2024 Fitschen provided new information about “Colonel” (Oberst) Walter Stahl, whose real name was Wolf Dietrich Meister. Meister was born in May 1908 and was a BND employee from 1 July 1961 to 15 April 1969 (having been intermittently engaged by BND between 1954 and 1958). Meister was a trained pilot and fluent in French. Meister was to travel to Leopoldville under official cover as a commercial adviser to air transportation companies, to establish a BND office there and to work as an adviser to the Government of the Congo, including the Ministry of Defence, on issues of air transportation.

213. In 1961, Meister was to deliver a gift from the Government of West Germany to the Government of the Congo of an unarmed DO-28 aircraft, equipped with a device

for crop dusting. An internal communication of 16 August 1961 from the Federal Foreign Office's division 307 to division 801 advised that the DO-28 was ready for delivery and offered to supply a pilot who could even stay in the Congo, on the basis that a plane delivered in flight (as opposed to one disassembled and shipped) would make more of an impression on the recipient. In another internal communication on the same day, division 307 advised division 801 that the plane was ready for delivery, although a handwritten comment on the letter noted that at the time the pilot was "travelling abroad" and a new delivery date would be needed. From subsequent correspondence, this delivery date did not appear to have been realized as at 3 November 1961.

214. Fitschen identified documents that showed Meister as being in Germany on 12 September 1961. This included a report referring to an incident at a German airbase when Meister (referred to as Stahl) entered the airbase, triggering an official investigation. A subsequent report observed that as at 17 October 1961 Meister was "on his way to his new duty station".

215. Fitschen noted that a cable dated 3 November 1961 from the West German Embassy in Leopoldville stated that Stahl had been present in Leopoldville at some time in late October. However, precise timing was unclear and no record was found to establish when Meister/Stahl arrived in Katanga or whether he was in the Katanga or Ndola area on 17 to 18 September 1961.

216. Regarding the information analysed in the 2022 report about Meister's involvement in a flight school in the Congo, in 2024 Fitschen identified records referring to this matter. Those records did not show when the flight school was established, or whether it existed in 1961. A cable of 6 February 1963 from the German Ambassador in Leopoldville to the Federal Foreign Office advised that Alexander Slomski, a German BND employee who was acting as a flight instructor in the Congo, had died in a plane crash at the Ndolo airfield on 5 February 1963. The cable requested that BND be informed immediately. British, Congolese, United Nations and United States officials attended a military memorial service after Slomski's death.

217. In 2020, I received new information from Gülstorff regarding a West German-supported Congo-wide telephone and telecommunication infrastructure for the civil and military administration, which included the setting up of a radio monitoring service for the Congolese intelligence agency (Sûreté Nationale).

218. Information received from Fitschen in 2024 stated that the telephone and telecommunication network, the existence of which appeared to have been known to ONUC, did not appear to have been operational until 1964. Furthermore, a search carried out in the German archives at Fitschen's direction did not reveal any information suggesting that the network was operational in Katanga in mid-September 1961 or that the network might have included the establishment of a radio monitoring service for the Congolese intelligence agency.

219. From the information provided by Gülstorff, it is not clear whether BND was directly involved in radio monitoring or signals intelligence in the Congo in 1961, which is a matter that remains to be established. If such activities involved BND, its archives may have records of radio communications from 17 to 18 September 1961.

220. Gülstorff also noted the significance of information that he had provided to the Independent Panel in 2015, which included a report from Elsie Kühn-Leitz. Kühn-Leitz was, according to her own account, an interlocutor between West Germany and the Government of the Congo and had interacted with and befriended Victor Nendaka, then chief of the Sûreté Nationale, who, along with Lumumba, had stayed at Kühn-Leitz's home in West Germany. In a report written for the West German Foreign

Office on 7 October 1961 following a discussion that Kühn-Leitz had had with Nendaka, she noted that Nendaka had expressed his opinion that “Ultras” (possibly French, in the context) of Tshombe were responsible for the plane crash and had shot the plane down with ground-based fire.

221. I shared details of the preceding information with Fitschen, who undertook further searches in 2023 and 2024. Fitschen stated that he was not able to find any reaction to the relevant parts of Kühn-Leitz’s report of 7 October 1961. A response to Kühn-Leitz from Steltzer of the Federal Foreign Office of 20 November 1961 did not refer to the meeting with Nendaka.

222. The information provided by Fitschen and Gülstorff reflects information discussed in previous reports, in particular regarding the systemic presence in and around Katanga at the relevant time of the intelligence personnel of foreign countries, including (in this case) the United States and West Germany. It also provides a basis for the proposition that further relevant information may exist, as discussed further below.

223. New information was provided to me by Fröhlich in 2024 that developed the information provided in 2022 regarding an account from the memoirs of German television journalist Klaus Manfred Eckstein (also known as Kiu Eckstein).

224. According to Eckstein, he was present in the Congo (including in Katanga) in September 1961 with a team that included cameraman Kurt Werner Drews and journalist Hans Germani, the latter of whom worked on an ad hoc basis for the West German intelligence agency, BND, as already noted. Eckstein identified entries from a calendar that he kept from 1961 in which he records that on 17 September 1961 he sent pictures to *The Sunday Telegraph* of Elisabethville Airport being bombed. Fröhlich said he had located a photograph matching Eckstein’s description, which had been published on the front page of *The Sunday Telegraph* on 17 September 1961 with accompanying text stating “Flames and smoke rising from the wreckage of an Air-Katanga DC4 airliner at Elisabethville airport, after a bomb attack by a French-built Fouga jet fighter, the last aircraft still at President Tshombe’s disposal. U.N. officials have stated that the plane was piloted by a Rhodesian. A *Sunday Telegraph* picture; other Katanga pictures p. 22 and Back Page”.

225. After Eckstein left Ndola, he apparently went to Salisbury, where he saw the transfer of Hammarskjöld’s coffin. The mission of the film team resulted in work that included, relevantly, episode 4 of series 3 of “Dispatches from the reporters of the Windrose” (*Die Reporter der Windrose berichten*), “Black Copper” (*Schwarzes Kupfer*), which was broadcast on 27 January 1963.

226. As discussed in the 2022 report, the cameraman Drews informed Eckstein around 2010 about having met a pilot during a medical stay at Lake Constance in the 1970s who stated that he had personally flown sacks of money from Katanga to Belgium, and that his colleague, another pilot, had dropped bombs on Elisabethville airfield with a Fouga Magister and had shot down Hammarskjöld’s plane. Drews, noted, had a particular interest in aviation and while flying for work would often seek to sit in the cockpit and converse with pilots and crew. Eckstein said that Drews stated that the pilot he met at Lake Constance had recounted specific details of the plane, including that it was used for training purposes but was converted to military use.

227. Fröhlich undertook further enquiries between 2022 and 2024, which included meeting with and interviewing Drews and his wife and examining Drews’s records, including his diaries. Drews’s diary from 1961 contained only summary references, but they included an entry on 13 September 1961 stating “4:00 Begin of the assault of the UN on the Post Office in Eville”, an entry of 17 September 1961 stating “Escape from Eville to Ndola” and an entry of 18 September 1961 stating “Flights from Ndola

back to Salisbury”. Subsequent relevant entries described a flight from Salisbury to Blantyre (Malawi) on 28 September and then later flights through various cities in East Africa and Europe to return to Hamburg on 13 October 1961.

228. As Fröhlich observed, the fact of Drews, Eckstein and Germani being in Ndola on the night of the crash is corroborated by a reference to the film team in correspondence from the German Embassy in Salisbury of 20 September 1961. In discussions with Fröhlich, Eckstein did not recall further specifics such as where they stayed in Ndola. Regarding the “escape” from Elisabethville referred to in Drews’s diary entry, Eckstein stated that while filming they had a confrontation with a group of local men, which Germani managed to negotiate them out of, after which they and other foreigners stayed at a hotel in Elisabethville when hostilities broke out.

229. As to Drews’s stay in Lake Constance in the 1970s during which he met the pilot, several possible clinics were identified by Fröhlich from Drews’s diaries and discussions. In an effort to attempt to determine the identity of the pilot, enquiries had been made of those clinics but no information was received at the time of writing the present report.

230. As also observed by Fröhlich, the pilot from Lake Constance referred to an air route between Katanga and Europe by which funds were transferred to Katanga. This mirrors remarks made by Gülstorff, Bat and others that the West German transportation carrier Continental Airways (Continental Deutsche Luftreederei) was involved in a Sabena-chartered delivery of armaments from Belgium to Kolwezi in April 1961. The crew of that flight was detained by ONUC before ultimately being released.

231. It is known from United Nations archives that the Avikat Fouga Magister attacked Elisabethville airport in August and September 1961. A number of potential pilots have been identified and are discussed in section III.A.3. It is not improbable that the same pilot that attacked the airport could have attacked Hammar skjöld’s plane. However, the account given to Drews requires additional details to be verified before it may be assigned a degree of potential utility.

232. Aside from cameraman Drews, Eckstein’s party also included journalist Germani. Eckstein described Germani’s strong views on colonialism, language skills and medical training. Of one experience during that trip, Eckstein recounted that “in copper-rich Katanga, a war without clear fronts broke out between Moise Tshombe’s paramilitia and the UN’s protection troops. We got caught between the fronts while filming. Armed black people in plain clothes arrested us. But the journalist, Hans Germani, a nimble Levantine from Trieste, skilfully manoeuvred us through this delicate situation”. It is recalled that in 2019 information was analysed from multiple sources, including CIA documents, that stated Hans Germani was a West German intelligence (BND) agent, working under cover of being a journalist (see 2019 report, sect. IV.A.1). Furthermore, a report of 20 September 1961 from the West German Embassy in Salisbury to the Foreign Office of West Germany stated that “the film group [of] Germani that just returned from Elisabethville, encountered the Germans Bachmann (owner of a garage) and Lönne (from Düsseldorf?) [sic] as well as two German journalists”.

233. In 2024 Fitschen provided further information about “Dr. Hans Germani”. Germani had a code name, Max Gärtner, was born in April 1927 and died in 1983. The information confirmed that Germani had been a BND intelligence source and contractor between 1 October 1957 and 1 March 1963. As of September 1960 Germani was paid by BND for ad hoc reports, rather than being an official employee.

234. Fitschen located two new reports referring to Germani, in addition to the 20 September 1961 document supplied by Gülstorff referred to in the 2022 report

(sect. III.A.3). These were a report of 2 October 1961 from the Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany in Salisbury to headquarters entitled “Events in Katanga”, which described the preparations of the Katangan army for its fight against ONUC; and another report of 10 October 1961, which focused on the relations between Rhodesia and India after the Prime Minister of India had publicly suggested that the Rhodesian Federation was secretly supporting the government of Katanga in its clashes with ONUC. Neither of these reports referred to the crash of the plane.

235. The topic of foreign intelligence agencies is an area where there is still significant undisclosed information. This is a matter to which I return in my conclusions.

2. Search and rescue

236. The early inquiries found that the wreckage of SE-BDY was found just after 1500 hours on 18 September 1961 (local time in Ndola being Greenwich mean time plus two hours), based on statements made by the Rhodesian authorities.

237. The search was stated to have been commenced only around 10 hours after SE-BDY was due to land because Rhodesian officials were unsure of the intentions of the pilots. The wreck was stated not to have been found for approximately five additional hours after the search was commenced. This was despite the fact that the approach and relative position of SE-BDY were known.

238. The time that the wreckage was said to have been discovered, some 15 hours after the plane had gone missing, is noteworthy in view of the significant delays to the search and rescue procedures. Among other things, these delays may have prejudiced the chances of survival of the sole surviving passenger, Julien. As Williams notes, it was the express view of the United States Resident Consul in Lusaka that the delay in finding the wreckage “may well have cost the life of Sergeant Julien”.

239. The reasons given for the delay in initiating the search procedures are difficult to understand in view of the fact that the airport manager, John “Red” Williams, was personally informed at 0330 hours by Marius van Wyk of a flash in the sky; this in a context where the plane was evidently already missing. Furthermore, air traffic control at Salisbury had communicated its concerns at 0430 hours and a United Nations plane staffed by a Norwegian crew attempted to assist the search at 0700 hours, only to be arrested by Rhodesian authorities. In addition, Rhodesian authorities were apparently informed on the morning of 18 September 1961 of the crash of the plane (and possibly its location) based on information provided by charcoal burners who were in the area of the crash, through local resident Timothy Kankasa.

240. Information analysed since the early inquiries has established that the wreckage must have been discovered at an earlier time than 1500 hours on 18 September. This includes information to that effect from individuals including British officials Lord Alport, his private secretary Brian Unwin, Ambassador Derek Riches and the Consul in Elisabethville, Denzil Dunnett, all of whom described having heard of the crash and/or the location of the wreckage before midday (Unwin described hearing of the wreckage location in the morning and Dunnett approximated that it was “before going to lunch”). As analysed further below, a similar account was also given by United States Air Attaché Colonel Don Gaylor. Gaylor was not mentioned in the reports of the early inquiries, although he gave a brief written statement to the Rhodesian Board. There have also been allegations analysed that hostile ground forces may have reached the wreckage before its official time of discovery (see, for example, 2019 report, sect. III.A.7).

241. Williams provided new information on this topic in 2024 as described below. Gaylor was in the Ndola air traffic control tower on 17 September 1961, having

travelled from Pretoria to Ndola at the direction of the Government of the United States. In email correspondence provided to me by Williams, Gaylor stated that he was acting on directions from the Pentagon. When Gaylor noted that flight SE-BDY had not arrived as scheduled, he intended to commence a flying search and rescue mission with his crew the next day, given the difficulties in doing so at night. Gaylor stated as much in a letter of 8 November 1994 to Bengt Rösiö, a copy of which I received from Simensen via Williams. In that letter Gaylor stated: “We therefore prepared for take-off at first light and I flew a reverse [sic] ADF approach to Ndola to look for a crash site. When this proved unsuccessful, we flew a grid pattern covering mostly the NW area and subsequently located the Site. I contacted the Ndola rescue frequency and gave them the map coordinates of the site. Then I circled the site for a considerable period around to give the party a point of reference. I also flew a heading along the path of the swath of cut trees the aircraft made when it crashed. This heading was not the correct heading for an ADF approach to Ndola. We speculated that the pilot had used the wrong approach chart”.

242. With his letter, Gaylor enclosed an aerial photo that he took of the crash site. He stated that the aircraft shadow was notable in the photo, showing the hour to be “not long after dawn”. Simensen located copies of what appear to be Gaylor’s photographs in the Swedish Foreign Ministry Archives, described in a letter from Minister Bratt, Pretoria, to the Swedish Foreign Minister of 28 September 1961 as “a number of aerial photos of the crash site just received from the US Air Attaché”. The photograph showing the shadow of a plane matches that used by Rösiö in his book “Ndola” (1996), in a section on Gaylor.

243. In 2023, Williams sought expert assistance from the Head of Astronomy and Plasma Physics at Chalmers University of Technology in Gothenburg, Jouni Kainulainen, to ascertain whether the time of Gaylor’s photograph could be determined from the shadow cast by his plane. Kainulainen provided an extensive analysis, which was shared with me, the conclusion of which was that he considered the photograph to have been taken between 1330 and 1600 hours. This analysis was based on the orientation and coordinates of the crash site, the direction of flight SE-BDY’s approach to Ndola (being from west-north-west), local area maps, the sun’s Azimuthal angle in that area on that date and the lengths and angles of the shadows. Although some matters precluded a precise calculation, including uncertainty of the angle between Gaylor’s plane and the camera’s optical axis, it was clear to Kainulainen that the sun’s direction was somewhere between north-north-west and west-south-west, indicating timing in the afternoon. Kainulainen’s analysis therefore indicates that the photograph in question was not taken on the morning of 18 September 1961.

244. As Williams notes, other information indicates that Gaylor could have taken off in the morning but flown until the afternoon, and/or flown both morning and afternoon sorties on 18 September 1961. In this regard, Gaylor’s memoir (*From Barnstorming to Bush Pilot*) states that he was “in the air for hours” between locating the crash site and the arrival of Rhodesian aircraft. Although imprecise, the reference to being in the “air for hours” appears to be consistent with Gaylor’s statement in his letter to Rösiö in which he stated that he had “contacted the Ndola rescue frequency and [given] them the map coordinates of the site”, after which he “circled the site for a considerable period to give the ground party a point of reference”. Rösiö’s book *Ndola* also refers to Gaylor commencing the aerial search in the morning, while ultimately taking the photograph in question “not ... too late in the afternoon”.

245. Williams also provided a copy of an email sent by Gaylor to Southall in 2010. In that email, Gaylor stated that his total search flight time from take-off to the arrival of the Rhodesian aircraft was four hours. That email also states that Gaylor provided a report of his activities to his “superiors in the Pentagon”, which “was acknowledged

with some accolades”. It closes with reference to the “unique intelligence operations” that both Gaylor and Southall had performed.

246. I am grateful for the new information and analysis from Simensen, Williams and Kainulainen regarding Gaylor’s account and photographs. Those photographs do not by themselves establish that Gaylor had located the wreckage in the morning of 18 September 1961, based on an analysis of Gaylor’s plane’s shadow. However, the fact that the photograph may have been taken in the early afternoon may still indicate a discovery earlier than the time of 1500 hours given by Rhodesian authorities. It is not excluded that Gaylor may have taken the photograph later than his initial sighting and reporting of the location, particularly in view of the surrounding commentary regarding the length of time that Gaylor was in the air. Based on this analysis, I would assign moderate probative value to the proposition that Gaylor’s photograph and records of subsequent correspondence establish that he located and reported the wreckage before the official time of 1500 hours on 18 September 1961.

247. Separate to this assessment, I consider that Gaylor’s account is of overall significance. In particular, his reference to “unique intelligence operations” and his report to the Pentagon indicate that he may have created other relevant records. Relatedly, given that the United States Resident Consul had assisted in transmissions to Elisabethville, Leopoldville and Washington, and was in close communication with the United States Consul General in Salisbury, undisclosed records from these sources may also refer to the time of the crash and other matters. Despite requesting copies of any such records from the United States, they have not been received. I flag this as a matter for follow-up.

248. Williams also recalls a report of 22 September 1961 prepared by Matlick that was sent to the United States Secretary of State. That report refers to, among other things, the writer’s impressions “that communications and air search by Rhodesian authorities was [sic] unexcusably late in getting started” and “that RRAF was cooperative but Rhodesian civil authorities not cooperative either because of their negative attitude towards UN operations in Katanga or to cover up their own inefficiency”. If Gaylor had advised Rhodesian authorities of the location of the crash site on the morning of 18 September and it then took “hours” for Gaylor to be joined by Rhodesian aircraft, that further calls into question the delay on the part of the Rhodesian civil authorities.

249. In a separate but related new analysis of information on this topic provided in 2024, Simensen observed that the time of the search action differed between the Rhodesian and other accounts. The Rhodesian Board’s report indicated that “the Africans who witnessed the crash or heard the explosions” did not report this until “about 1300 GMT” (1500 hours local time), which was at the same time as the RRAF had already sighted the wreck from the air. However, two other sources stated that the RRAF had found the site based on information that African witnesses on the ground had provided to the airport via the police. These two sources were Ake Landin, the Swedish Inspector of Civil Aviation, in his comments of 22 November 1961 on the draft report of the Board, and the United States Consul General in Salisbury, Emmerson, in his 18 September 1961 report to the United States Secretary of State. While the latter report described “planes whereabouts”, this was likely a misspelling of “plane’s whereabouts”, rather than a description of two aircraft.

250. Separately, the United States Air Attaché, Colonel Ben Matlick, had given evidence to the Rhodesian Board that while in the air near Mufulira (around 40 miles from Ndola) “at about noon” he heard from Leopoldville that local police had been informed of the crash, and himself saw a Canberra aircraft already circling over a fire near there. As Simensen observes, this time is earlier than reported by others; Matlick was apparently appointed to coordinate United Nations and United States search

activities around two hours before the RRAF appointed a search director at 1400 hours local time. As Simensen observes, some of Matlick's reports, including his 22 September 1961 report to the Secretary of State, appear to have been heavily reliant on information from the Rhodesian Director of Civil Aviation, Lieutenant Colonel Barber. However, Matlick's report of his own search activities is based on his own primary observations.

251. Although information regarding search and rescue actions does not relate directly to a potential cause the crash, it remains important to analyse the topic for relevant contextual information that may both explain other actions subsequently taken, as well as to indicate sources for potential further inquiry.

3. Influence on early inquiries

252. Between 2017 and 2022, in successive reports I have analysed information that the representatives of the United Kingdom and Northern Rhodesia were affected by partiality and attempted to influence the 1961 United Nations Commission to find that pilot error was the cause of the crash (2017 report, sect. V.A, and 2019 and 2022 reports, sect. IV.A.2).

253. As analysed in those reports, contemporaneous documents showed that the Rhodesian authorities discussed at the highest levels the desirability of avoiding the convening of a separate United Nations Commission and, when it was clear that one would be convened, sought to "cultivate" the Commissioners and steer the outcome towards one of pilot error. Other information showed that British officials similarly sought and obtained revisions to the draft report of the United Nations Commission in advance of its publication, with a similar aim of ruling out sabotage or external attack as a cause of the crash. On this basis, it was established that the United Kingdom and Northern Rhodesia were concerned to ensure that a conclusion of pilot error being the cause of the crash was reached in 1961/62, rather than merely permitting an impartial analysis to occur.

254. No new information was received on this topic under the present mandate. Despite opportunities to do so, no Member State sought to clarify the findings of the 2022 report, on which basis I consider those findings to be strengthened.

B. Other matters

1. Harold Julien

255. To recall, a sole passenger of flight SE-BDY, Sergeant Harold Julien, the acting ONUC Chief Security Officer, was found alive when the plane's wreckage was discovered, but succumbed to his injuries six days later while being treated at Ndola Hospital. Julien was burned and injured but conscious and articulate when officials arrived at the site of the crash on the afternoon of 18 September 1961. On being transported and then admitted to Ndola Hospital on 18 September 1961, Julien made statements to Alfred Allen, Senior Inspector and Officer in Charge of Ndola Central Police Station, that included "it blew up [over the runway]", "there was great speed, great speed", "then there was the crash", "there were lots of little explosions all around", "I pulled the emergency tab and just ran out", and "[the others] were just trapped". These statements, evidence of which was given to the Rhodesian Board by Allen, echoed those made to another witness, nurse Sister McGrath, who was on duty at Ndola Hospital and tended to Julien as he was being admitted. She heard him say, in the presence of a police officer and doctors, "We were on the runway and there was an explosion", and "We were on the runway when Mr. Hammarskjöld said 'Go back', then there was an explosion", and "I was the only one that got out, all the others were trapped." Relatedly, nurse Sister Kavanagh had also attended to Julien at Ndola

Hospital on 18 and 19 September 1961, and had stated that Julien had said distinctly, without confusion, “I am Sergeant Harry Julien, Security Officer to UNO. Would you please tell Leopoldville of the crash. Tell my wife and kids I am O.K. before the casualty list is published”.

256. On the same evening, 18 September 1961, Dr. Lowenthal was on duty at Ndola Hospital and spoke with Julien. The conversation, as Dr. Lowenthal clarified to United Nations investigator Blandori, occurred before Julien was sedated with painkillers (pethidine) at the hospital. Dr. Lowenthal described Julien’s manner of speech as being lucid, clear and coherent, and, as observed by Williams, Dr. Lowenthal participated in the Rhodesian hearings as a volunteer witness because he felt strongly about the need to pass this information on. Dr. Lowenthal said that he asked why they had not landed when they were expected to, and Julien replied indicating that Hammarskjöld had changed his mind or said “Turn back”. Julien said that there was an explosion and then a crash, and a little later said that there was a crash and then an explosion, and that Julien had jumped from the aircraft.

257. Statements such as these were made by Julien, the only first-hand witness of the incident. Properly characterizing and assessing his testimony should have been a matter of the highest priority for the early inquiries. However, the Rhodesian Board discussed his statement about “sparks in the sky” in a single paragraph, disregarding it. The Rhodesian Commission of Inquiry report spent not more than approximately one page on Julien’s statements and evidence given by others about them. Despite the clear potential importance of Julien’s information, the Rhodesian Commission dismissed each of Julien’s statements without analysis, holding that “no attention need be paid” to them, as “they either relate to the fire after the crash, or to a symptom of his then condition”. Ultimately, out of the 27 witnesses who were able to testify about Julien, the Rhodesian Commission heard only eight, and the United Nations Commission in 1961 heard only five of those eight. The result of this was the loss of a significant opportunity to adequately consider evidence from the only passenger of flight SE-BDY who could speak of the crash. This was a significant material failure to consider potentially relevant evidence.

258. In the 2019 and 2022 reports, I analysed information that indicated that Northern Rhodesian authorities had attempted to limit access to Julien generally, and had misrepresented the state of his health. This included assuring United Nations representatives that in the days before Julien ultimately died on 23 September 1961 he was “holding his own”, despite being aware that he was “dangerously ill”. Furthermore, as discussed in the 2019 report, Rhodesian official Colonel Archer had sought to ensure that Julien’s statements about an explosion on board SE-BDY and sparks in the sky were not publicized, including by having attending doctors “make sure that none of their staff talked” about it.

259. In the 2022 report, I also analysed new information, which included correspondence of 19 September 1961 from the United States Embassy in Salisbury to the White House stating that “Sgt [sic] in lucid moments stated that he is the Chief Security Officer for UN in Leopoldville. He requested that his wife be informed of his survival”, which contrasted with the Rhodesian inquiries’ characterization of Julien’s state as being rambling or delirious. Related to this characterization, in the 2022 report I noted that new information indicating that there may have been a tape recorder at Julien’s bedside was an important matter for potential future inquiry as, if existing, records of Julien’s statements may permit an independent assessment of his condition.

260. Simensen provided an analysis of information regarding Julien in 2024. This included identifying that the Rhodesian enquiries had only received a summary report of around 1.5 pages in length about Julien’s state of health and treatment, authored

by Dr. McNab, which was undated and transmitted to the Rhodesian Board on 6 December 1961. This summary report was based on Julien's case history, but did not produce or disclose the actual case notes of his treatment. Simensen also observed that Cook, Counsel for the Rhodesian Federation to the 1961 United Nations Commission, had in his submissions to that Commission sought to discount Julien's evidence, while at the same time acknowledging that Julien had at times spoken distinctly and without confusion while alive.

261. Simensen also identified that a report of 27 September 1961 from the Swedish Vice Consul in Salisbury, Forstenius, to Stockholm, referred to discussions Forstenius had with Julien's wife. Julien's wife had stated that Julien had, while in an apparently lucid state on 22 September 1961 before he passed away the following day on 23 September 1961, made further statements about "another flashlight" and "earth approaching too fast". According to related information previously identified by Williams, although Julien was sedated and not speaking much at that time, Mrs. Julien considered that he was lucid and said that he had also mentioned three explosions on the plane.

262. Mrs. Julien was not, however, asked to give evidence about such matters to the early inquiries.

263. The new information further underscores that Julien's important testimony was not examined with sufficient attention or comprehensive consideration by the early inquiries. Julien's descriptions of several matters are particularly notable, including that before the crash the plane was moving at significant speed and that there were explosions. Such observations, if correct, would suggest that the plane was not fully under the control of the pilots at the time of the crash, and that it was on fire before it hit the ground, rather than that it caught fire after crashing.

2. Other information: general

264. It may be recalled that after the crash, bullets and/or projectile-related items, including cartridge cases and percussive caps, were found in some of the bodies of the victims. Initially, this led to speculation that occupants of the plane may have been shot after the crash.

265. A ballistics examination indicated that the bullets had not been fired from a gun, a conclusion that was reached based on various factors, including the absence of rifling marks. Medical evidence, including that the wounds were superficially located and did not appear oriented such that the bullets or fragments had come from a consistent direction, also supported this finding. Based on this analysis, the Rhodesian Commission of Inquiry and the 1961 United Nations Commission considered that the injuries likely resulted from the thermal explosion of ammunition in the fire that occurred after the crash. Ballistic and medical experts engaged by the 2013 Hammarskjöld Commission and Independent Panel concurred with this view and agreed that the medical evidence established that none of the occupants of the plane had a contributing cause of death resulting from bullet wounds.

266. Simensen provided information in 2023 and 2024 on this topic, which was comprised of a close analysis of the material then available and was prepared in relation to the early inquiries. Among other matters, Simensen noted inconsistencies between the representatives who played a role in or observed the medical examinations in 1961, what material each had access to and the investigative conclusions, including whether two or three bodies were found to have bullet wounds or fragments.

267. I note my gratitude for the close analysis conducted of the material. As various aspects of the work in recent years have shown, reconsideration of original material

in the light of modern advancements of the state of knowledge has the potential to lead to it being possible to arrive at new and important conclusions.

268. In his analysis, Simensen also made the following observations. Senior Inspector Appleton of the Northern Rhodesia police gave different versions of his testimony, including regarding which bodies foreign objects had been removed from and the quantities of fragments that were removed. Simensen also observed that Cordier, the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs, may not have been correctly informed by Sloan, Principal Secretary of the 1961 United Nations Commission, about the number of bodies found with bullets. Separately, the medical reports did not appear to establish that percussive cap remnants were in any of the bodies.

269. The analysis conducted by Simensen may bear out the idea that the medical examinations and their consideration by observers, including from Rhodesia, Sweden and the United Nations, were not necessarily based on access to uniform information at all stages, or that inconsistent statements may have been made by parties connected with the medical examination process.

270. It is not necessary to make an assessment of the probative value of the new analysis regarding the medical reports at the present time. The primary reason for this is that the conclusions reached by the Hammarskjöld Commission and the Independent Panel, which have been affirmed by the Eminent Person, appear to exclude that any of the passengers of the plane died as a result of being shot after landing (see, for example, 2017 report, sect. VI.C.2). The ballistic and medical examinations are the primary evidence for this finding and their conclusions have been affirmed by subsequent independent expert analysis. There is no information presently before me to affect these conclusions.

3. Other information requiring further enquiry

271. Certain information received between 2023 and 2024 allows for potential future inquiries, either as a result of the information opening up further avenues of inquiry, or because there was insufficient time for further follow-up when the information was received just prior to the finalization of the present report in July 2024. I have flagged such matters in the body of the report.

V. Findings and conclusions

272. Paragraph 1 of resolution [77/252](#) requires me, if possible, to draw conclusions from the investigations already conducted. While it is not possible on the basis of currently known information to reach a conclusion about the ultimate cause or causes of the crash, certain findings may be reached. In this section I provide a synopsis of the state of known material information that may affect an assessment of the feasible hypotheses regarding the tragic event.

A. Cause or causes of the crash

273. As noted above, many hypotheses and speculations about the cause of the crash have been ruled out based on work done since 2013.

274. I note that it is not possible to absolutely exclude the possibility of material, mechanical or structural failure, because so much of the plane was destroyed by fire. However, the available information indicates that the plane was making a normal approach to land in Ndola. The plane's angle of descent, speed, undercarriage extension, configuration and engine operation at the time of impact do not indicate

uncontrolled operation. Equipment or communications malfunctions also appear to be excluded, including altimeter error (whether mechanical or the use of the wrong pressure setting (QNH)), or that incorrect landing charts were used.

275. Unrelated to the fact of the crash but relevant to the fate of the plane's occupants, information reviewed since 2015 appears to exclude that the passengers may have been assassinated after the crash. Medical records, including a modern re-examination of the original medical and autopsy X-rays, indicate that the passengers died instantaneously in the crash (with the exception of Julien who succumbed six days later), and that there were no bullet wounds inflicted on Hammarskjöld.

276. The hypotheses of causes of the crash that appear to remain feasible are that flight SE-BDY crashed because it was subjected to an intentional interference before landing (either external interference, such as an attack or threat from outside the plane, or internal interference, such as sabotage), or as a result of unintentional human error. Each of these hypotheses is described under the respective concluding remarks below.

1. It remains plausible that an external attack or threat was a cause of the crash

277. Based on an extensive analysis of the historical record, new information and expert opinion, in each of the 2017, 2019 and 2022 reports I concluded that it was plausible that an external attack or threat caused the plane to crash, whether through direct action or by distracting the pilots. In information analysed under the present mandate, I have found no evidence to rule out this possibility, and it remains a plausible hypothesis. Evidence that supports an external act includes the testimony of eyewitnesses, as well as the claims of individuals who have stated that they heard or read a transcript of communications relating to an air- or ground-based attack on the plane.

278. Since immediately after the crash in 1961, the United States and others considered it possible that the plane had been attacked. Multiple reports from the United States Ambassador to the Congo, Edmund Gullion, on 18 September 1961 described that the plane "may have been shot down", and that there had been a "flash in the air" that preceded its demise. Although I have requested the information on which this analysis was based from the United States to further assess the claims, it has not been provided.

279. New information that has been analysed in recent years continues to show additional capabilities that existed for an attack against SE-BDY, which were unknown or overlooked in 1961 and 1962. The violent context of the ongoing hostilities was not attributed significance in the early inquiries. Actors hostile to the United Nations had both the motive and capability to carry out an attack and, as has become increasingly evident, Hammarskjöld's travel plans were not secret, which increases the likelihood of premeditated hostile action. The convergence of many individuals of significance in Ndola on the evening of 17 September 1961 is an indicator of this.

(a) Information from eyewitnesses

280. Multiple eyewitnesses have provided significant evidence regarding the last moments of SE-BDY. Seven witnesses informed the Rhodesian inquiries that they saw a second or third aircraft. The 1961 United Nations Commission heard at least six witnesses who spoke of noticing more than one plane, and at least 12 witnesses who spoke of a flash (or similar light) in the sky. However, the early inquiries discounted many of these testimonies, often because the witnesses were "African".

281. Since the early inquiries, an additional 12 eyewitnesses have come forward with similar accounts, further corroborating the possibility of an external attack. The Independent Panel of Experts heard from five new witnesses who observed more than one aircraft, and seven who claimed that a large aircraft that they saw was on fire prior to crashing. Eyewitness accounts can be flawed, as a result of sensory misperception, failing memory, cognitive bias or other reasons. However, the consistency and independence of the eyewitness testimonies make them difficult to dismiss categorically.

(b) Claims that communications regarding the attack were overheard

282. There is a significant potential that undisclosed records of radio traffic of the final moments of flight SE-BDY exist. Any such records are of heightened importance in view of the suspicious destruction of notes by the Ndola air traffic controller, Arundel Campbell Martin, and the inconsistent statements that he made to the early inquiries.

283. Various witnesses, including British and Northern Rhodesian officials in Ndola, noted that United States aircraft with sophisticated equipment were likely monitoring radio traffic from Ndola, and had in that period communicated with other airborne aircraft. The British High Commissioner in Salisbury, Lord Alport, also understood SE-BDY to have communicated with someone other than the Ndola air traffic control tower after the last recorded communication between Ndola air traffic control and SE-BDY. The records of these United States aircraft and reports by their personnel have been requested but not disclosed. They are obviously consequential.

284. The Independent Panel of Experts assigned moderate probative value to the claims made by Charles Southall and Paul Abram that they had separately listened to or read a transcript of an intercept of radio transmissions on the night of 17 to 18 September 1961. Since 2017, new information has surfaced that supports these claims. Notably, information regarding the service records of Abram and Southall with the United States Air Force and Navy, respectively, has been received and shared with the United States.

285. I have given the United States significant information since 2017 and the opportunity to clarify, modify or controvert the claims made by Abram and Southall. The fact that this opportunity has not been taken up tends to have the effect of supporting those claims. Both men's accounts, backed by their confirmed positions and duties in communications and signals intelligence gathering, highlight that relevant communications about the crash are likely to exist in United States records.

286. I have previously assessed Abram's and Southall's claims to be of strong probative value that the United States was monitoring radio traffic, and that relevant records of transcripts were highly likely to have been created. I have retained that assessment in the present report.

287. The information analysed in recent reports has confirmed that some Member States were monitoring, intercepting and receiving intercepts of sensitive United Nations communications in and around Katanga and Ndola in September 1961. Despite specific requests and queries, no responsive information or documents have been identified by the Member States concerned. As observed in the 2022 report, the non-cooperation of Member States in this key area may be seen to be approaching intentional obstruction of the full truth of the circumstances and events.

(c) Capacity to conduct an external attack

288. The route flown by flight SE-BDY was over a conflict zone where the United Nations was actively engaged in hostilities. There were various aircraft, weapons and

personnel capable of mounting an attack against the plane. However, while the early inquiries focused on a sole Fouga Magister jet, information analysed in recent years has shown that many more aircraft and airstrips were operational in the area, with several being used offensively against United Nations forces. Multiple aircraft types, including the Fouga Magister, Dornier DO-27 and DO-28 and De Havilland Dove, were combat-modified and capable of attacking SE-BDY. The presence of other forces, including Northern Rhodesian air units with jet fighters and bombers, further supports the militarized nature of the area. Notably, Lord Alport's correspondence to Duncan Sandys, the United Kingdom Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, of 25 September 1961 referred to amassed Rhodesian air and land forces on the Katangan border before the crash, stating that "practically the whole of the fighting strength of the RRAF together with a European infantry battalion and a squadron of armoured cars was ordered to Northern Rhodesia forthwith" around 13 September 1961.

289. There were also many individuals in the service of Katangan forces (including Avikat) able to pilot an attacking plane, which was another matter that was not appreciated in 1961–1962. Although attacking under nocturnal conditions would have been challenging, air-to-air and air-to-ground attacks against the United Nations and others are recorded as having occurred, including at night. Moreover, a simple act of harassment during the critical approach phase could have had the potential to cause a crash, even without a direct attack.

290. As I have previously observed, the fact that it would have been possible to execute an aerial and/or ground-based attack is not the same as having specific information about such an attack having occurred. The state of presently known matters is simply that an attack or threat cannot be ruled out, and remains a plausible hypothesis based on the facts that have been established.

2. Internal interference: it is not possible at present to conclude whether sabotage was a cause of the crash

291. The 1961 United Nations Commission noted that on 17 September 1961 the *Albertina* was on the tarmac in Leopoldville for several hours without being specifically guarded. It was there for repairs after being hit by bullets from ground-fired small arms earlier that day. The possibility of an unauthorized approach to the aircraft for the purpose of sabotage could not be ruled out. Although no foreign items were found in the wreckage, this could not absolutely exclude remnants of sabotage, given that 75–80 per cent of the plane's fuselage was destroyed and/or melted by fire.

292. Most claims of potential sabotage have been ruled out, including the previously stated hypothesis that there may have been an extra passenger who could have hijacked the plane. However, it has not been possible to conclusively assess or dismiss the sabotage claim outlined in the Operation Celeste documents discussed above. As analysed in 2019 and 2022, SAIMR appears to have existed as an organization, although details salient to this investigation, such as whether it had the capacity to carry out an attack in 1961, have not been conclusively determined.

293. The available information suggests that it is unlikely that Operation Celeste could have been carried out successfully by SAIMR in 1961. However, for a complete assessment, it remains necessary that South Africa provide access to the Operation Celeste documents, in whatever form they are available, and that South Africa and other Member States assist in disclosing any available information on this topic.

3. It remains possible that the crash was an accident caused by human (pilot) error, with no interference

294. Given that mechanical, structural or material failures appear to be excluded, if the flight was not subject to interference the crash is almost certain to have resulted from a problem of human error, such as a combination of the pilots misreading the instrument approach and not being able to see the ground. Aircraft accidents are a possibility, even where a crew may be experienced and operating under normal flight conditions.

295. In the present report I have considered new expert opinion on whether SE-BDY was attempting to make a voluntary attempted forced landing. The opinion of Karlsson tends against such a finding.

296. Pilot error cannot be conclusively ruled out based on current evidence. Any such error may be the only probable remaining explanation if all information of material probative value has been disclosed and reviewed, and no other hypothesis reasonably consistent with the evidence remains. However, as found in the 2022 report, it would not be rational to reach this conclusion at the present stage, when it is almost certain that not all the information of material probative value has been disclosed. It would be premature to reach any conclusive finding while knowing that one has not seen all potentially material evidence.

297. The prominent obstacle to reaching closure in this matter remains that important information appears not to have been disclosed by Member States. As I have previously noted, the most important undisclosed information likely relates to whether, for example, alleged voice intercepts were created or still exist, and whether any security, intelligence or other entity created or held records of the presence of an aerial or ground attack.

B. Other matters

1. Cooperation of and information held by key Member States

298. As in successive earlier resolutions, the General Assembly in resolution [77/252](#) outlined a process to seek full disclosure of relevant records and called upon Member States to support that process. An increasingly strong majority of States Members of the United Nations has urged concrete action to support the collective pursuit of the full truth concerning the tragic incident.

299. The majority of the Member States that I have interacted with since 2018 have complied with the letter and spirit of the request that they conduct a dedicated internal review of their intelligence, security and defence archives. However, the three key Member States that are most likely to hold significant undisclosed information, being South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States, have not disclosed any new material information since 2017. (The United States had drawn my attention in 2021 to two publicly available documents, entitled “President’s Intelligence Checklist”, dated 18 and 19 September 1961, although these records did not constitute new information in the manner defined in the 2022 report.)

300. Although Member States may consider that they have previously complied with previous search requests, it is important for full disclosure that searches be conducted again in view of the significant advancements in knowledge, and that the searches be conducted by personnel with adequate contextual knowledge.

301. As the annexed correspondence indicates, under the present mandate specific queries asked of each of the key Member States remain unanswered. In brief summary

form, each of these Member States may be expected to hold undisclosed information for the reasons described below.

(a) South Africa

302. South Africa may be expected to hold undisclosed information as it was an important transit point for materiel and personnel into the Katanga and Ndola regions. I note for completeness that the administration of South Africa in 1961 was not the same as it is at present. Nonetheless, immigration, flight, police, intelligence and other official records are likely to have been created in respect of named persons of interest in September 1961, including those referred to in section III.A.2 above, and may still be accessible. Furthermore, copies of Operation Celeste documents were located in South Africa, about which various questions remain.

(b) United Kingdom

303. The United Kingdom may be expected to hold undisclosed information as it had a significant diplomatic and intelligence presence in and around the Congo in 1961, with British officials playing a key role in events before, during and after the crash (see, for example, 2022 report, sect. IV.A.1). This included holding a central role in setting up and organizing the meeting that Hammarskjöld was travelling to when SE-BDY crashed. This role was not just performed locally: as is clear from correspondence, including Lord Alport's letter to Sandys of 25 September 1961, London had given authority for local agents to coordinate international events through MI6 agent Ritchie, including to manage the meeting between Tshombe and Hammarskjöld. This is also supported by information obtained from private archives, including those of Hunt, Loeb and Tshombe, which was analysed in the 2022 report. Despite this, no documentation generated by or sent to Ritchie or his interlocutors has been disclosed.

304. Representatives of the United Kingdom may also have been involved in delaying the arrival of Ethiopian jets that were to be used as an escort for flight SE-BDY. Recalling previously analysed information received from Simensen, the United States and the United Nations, there was a question as to whether British withholding of overflight clearances from British territories in East Africa delayed the arrival of the Ethiopian jets to the Congo, which caused flight SE-BDY to travel to Ndola unescorted and exposed to potential attack (2017 report, sect. IV.A.4).

305. Information analysed in the 2022 report included a message sent at 7.45 a.m. on 19 September 1961 by which Ritchie informed Tshombe that he had asked the British Government "to require the UN to not send the jets". This appeared to establish that Ritchie sought the intervention of the United Kingdom to stop Ethiopian jets being sent to support ONUC, and that he communicated this to Tshombe. However, as noted in the 2022 report in section IV.A.4, it is not clear whether the jets could in any event have reached Katanga in time to assist flight SE-BDY, regardless of any intervention by Ritchie.

306. After the plane crash, British involvement remained central. Ritchie was the sole foreign representative at certain ceasefire negotiations between the United Nations and Katanga, with Lord Alport advising Tshombe directly in relation to them.

307. Furthermore, the plane crash occurred in the then-British protectorate of the Rhodesian Federation. The United Kingdom and Northern Rhodesia had each received intercepts of United Nations communications. As the work of the Independent Appointee of Zimbabwe uncovered, Lord Alport's papers confirm that important documents were removed from the Rhodesian Federation and transmitted to British authorities for safe keeping and, prior to Zimbabwe's independence, colonial authorities "meticulously removed almost every record or archive associated

with the Dag Hammarskjöld Crash". These records, including of police, intelligence, military and immigration authorities, are likely to be of central importance. The fate or unrestricted accessibility of the removed Rhodesian records associated with the tragic incident remain to be elaborated upon.

308. Representatives of the United Kingdom also played a key role in establishing and facilitating official and unofficial communications. Correspondence at the relevant time passed through Hunt and Ritchie to recipients including Lord Alport, British Consul Dunnett, Secretary Maudling, Minister Munongo, President Tshombe, Prime Minister Welensky and Hammarskjöld. Hunt was a key interlocutor and, as the material from Loeb's archives shows, he worked in close collaboration with Ritchie, to the extent that Ritchie, Loeb and Hunt stayed together in Kitwe on the night of the plane crash. This role in facilitating communications underscores the likelihood that important undisclosed records were created and may still exist.

(c) United States

309. The United States may be expected to hold undisclosed information as it had a significant diplomatic, intelligence and defence presence in and around the Katanga and Ndola regions in September 1961, as well as the ability to intercept and transmit communications over long distances. Furthermore, at least two of its service personnel have confirmed hearing, at the stations where they were posted, about an attack on the plane over radio communication facilities.

310. By virtue of its mobile military assets, the United States had sophisticated communications capabilities able to communicate between Ndola and Washington, D.C., which were operating on the night of the crash, potentially as interception, recording and relay stations. This included manned aircraft parked at Ndola airport with their engines running overnight, which Lord Alport understood to be in contact with flight SE-BDY (2017 report, sect. V.C.2). Despite this, no information gathered through these assets, including signal and communications intelligence, have been disclosed.

311. In addition, as analysed in the 2022 report, it appears highly likely that local and regional Ndola radio traffic on the night of 17 to 18 September 1961 was tracked and recorded by United States agencies, including NSA and possibly CIA. Specific accounts have been received from United States Air and Navy personnel (Charles Southall and Paul Abram), who provided uncontroverted information that they were working for or in support of NSA activities on the night of the crash and heard or read a transcription of a recording about an attack on flight SE-BDY.

312. United States intelligence agencies also had a significant presence in the Congo more broadly in 1961, with stations in Leopoldville and Elisabethville. Certain of those agencies' personnel have stated that the crash of SE-BDY was not an accident. Similarly, Senator Frank Church, who played a leading role in the United States Senate Select Committee (the Church Committee) and related investigations into intelligence operations involving entities including CIA and NSA, is said to have claimed that the United States had significant undisclosed information relating to the crash of SE-BDY.

313. After the crash, military personnel of the United States were involved in early search efforts and may have located the wreck prior to its official time of discovery, as discussed above at section IV.A.

314. Regarding diplomatic and other matters, the United States Ambassador to the Congo, Gullion, and others played a key role in relation to Katanga in 1961. Gullion received information immediately after the crash that the plane may have been shot down, but the source of this information has not been disclosed. Regarding examples

of other matters, a United States company, Seven Seas Airlines, shipped the Fouga jets to Katanga, which aircraft were used against the United Nations. This information was analysed in the 2022 report (sect. IV.A.1).

315. Aside from reasons why the United States may be expected to hold relevant undisclosed information, it is also noted that the United States may have a particular interest in ascertaining the full truth of the circumstances of the crash. As Williams has observed, one quarter of the 16 victims were American: Vladimir Fabry, Legal Adviser to ONUC, Sergeant Harold Julien, Acting Chief Security Officer, William Ranallo, bodyguard and personal aide to Hammarskjöld, and Heinrich Wieschhoff, a key adviser to Hammarskjöld.

2. Further relevant information must exist

316. The matters under the previous subheading are examples of reasons why the three key Member States may be expected to hold undisclosed information. As already noted, despite not providing any new information or responses to specific queries under the present mandate, each of these Member States has in 2024 committed to cooperating with this inquiry, for which I express my gratitude. As stated above in respect of South Africa, a new working methodology has been proposed that may provide a useful way forward. If so, it may also be considered for adoption by the United Kingdom and the United States.

317. Discrete searches for relevant information and any subsequent discovery of the matters discussed under the respective thematic headings above have also been raised with Ethiopia, Italy and the Republic of the Congo. Any information responsive to those search requests would also contribute to our increased understanding of the tragic event and are flagged as matters for potential follow-up.

318. Since the 2017 report, under each mandate I have retained the assessment that the burden of proof is held by key Member States to show that they have conducted a full review of records and archives in their custody or possession. An adequate discharge of the burden of disclosure of all potentially relevant information would arise on sufficient disclosure being met. As discussed earlier in this section, no new and material documentation has been disclosed by the key Member States since mid-2017, despite advances in the state of knowledge and correspondingly modified search requests, for which reasons I respectfully submit that this burden is yet to be fully satisfied.

3. Matters with potential resource implications

319. I note that work pursuant to this mandate has been undertaken in line with the decision of the General Assembly in resolution [77/252](#) and the budget that is allocated to the matter. As already observed, the mandate is not structured or resourced as a full investigation, meaning that most of the material analysed in the present report has been provided voluntarily by Member States, individuals or experts with technical or specialized knowledge, rather than by investigative work carried out by the Eminent Person.

320. Several individuals have suggested that there may be utility in undertaking specific investigative tasks, which would require resources to be allocated or provided voluntarily. One example is a dedicated mission to conduct research in specific private archives, such as those of Sabena (an airline operating in the Congo in 1960, for which van Risseghem worked), or Union Minière du Haut-Katanga (now Umicore), which was linked to the secession movement in Katanga.

321. A further example of potential investigative tasks relates to a re-examination of the plane wreckage using modern technology. The potential benefits of a

re-examination of the plane are championed by researchers, including Poulgrain. A re-examination of the plane wreckage was considered in 2013 by the Hammarskjöld Commission and in 2015 by the Independent Panel. To recall, the report of Mr. Frei-Sulzer (annex XII to the 1962 United Nations Commission Report) did not find evidence in the wreckage of the plane of foreign substances or material that would suggest sabotage. However, as Poulgrain observes, modern technology such as X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS) may be able to better analyse any remaining material than the smelting analysis conducted by Frei-Sulzer in 1962.

322. The purpose of a re-examination of any remaining wreckage would include to ascertain whether metal adjoining key parts of the landing mechanism (including the hydraulics junction box) was affected by foreign substances that may be indicators of sabotage. To carry out such an analysis, it would be necessary to identify first where any remaining material of the wreckage is located (possibly in Zambia near the crash site, and/or Switzerland where Frei-Sulzer carried out his work) before conducting tests on it. Given that much of the fuselage was burned in the crash and certain of the remaining wreckage melted in subsequent tests, together with the degrading effects of the passing of time since, there may be little within the remaining material that is capable of conclusive testing. However, I flag this as a matter of potential utility, which if considered necessary would likely require specific resourcing or voluntary assistance.

4. Dedicated online collection

323. Significant new information has been generated since the early inquiries concluded their work. Accordingly, following the recommendation of the Independent Panel, since adopting its resolution 70/11 the General Assembly has requested an exploration of the feasibility of establishing a central archival holding or other holistic arrangement for records and archives related to the Dag Hammarskjöld investigation. The United Nations has created an online collection, which is hosted through the Archives and Records Management Section, from which I have received significant assistance over time. It is presently accessible via the following address: <https://archives.un.org/content/death-dag-hammarskjold>.

324. Under the present mandate I have liaised with the United Nations to identify further records that may be suitable for inclusion in such a collection. Making as many records as possible publicly available supports the goals of transparency and equity of access.

325. Furthermore, not all submissions that are received by the Eminent Person are assessed for probative value, but may still be useful for Member States, private researchers and interested individuals. Where a submission may be valuable for reasons other than its relation to the key hypotheses that remain regarding the cause or causes of the crash, for reasons of economy it is not necessarily referred to specifically or assessed for probative value. Some submissions provided under the present mandate, for example certain of those provided by Simensen, are in this category of research that is historically important but not analysed fully in the present report. It may be valuable for such submissions to be available publicly, where consent has been provided for this.

326. On this topic, one of the recommendations discussed below is that information that relates to the subject matter of this investigation, including the relevant records and archives of the United Nations and other material identified for its importance by the Eminent Person, should be made publicly available through a dedicated online collection. I acknowledge that this may have implications in terms of resources.

VI. Recommendations and conclusions

A. Basis for recommendations

327. In each of its recent resolutions on this matter, the General Assembly has mandated in increasingly robust terms that the inquiry into the tragic events continue. While with each mandate the state of knowledge has grown, it has also become more focused. In this regard, many theories and allegations that had persisted since 1961 have methodically been reduced, with unsubstantiated claims discarded. There remain a limited number of hypotheses for what occurred in the final tragic moments of flight SE-BDY. It is my view that additional efforts may permit a further narrowing of the potential explanations, by the ruling out of one or more of the remaining hypotheses.

328. The vigorous work of private individuals and good faith efforts by Member States have continued to advance our understanding of directly and contextually relevant matters. However, full disclosure is yet to be achieved. The existing record indicates that important undisclosed information is still held in the intelligence, security and defence archives of a small number of Member States. The clearly expressed desire of the General Assembly is that appropriate arrangements for access to this information should be granted.

329. Hammarskjöld and the members of his party are rightly celebrated for their work and ultimate sacrifice in service of the noble aims of the United Nations. Time has not reduced the importance of a true accounting of history to the families of the victims of flight SE-BDY, to the global community, or to the Organization itself. The search for the truth calls for the good faith cooperation of all Member States, so many years after the tragic event.

330. My assessment remains that it is almost certain that specific relevant information exists, but that it has not been disclosed by a small number of Member States. Lack of disclosure remains the primary obstacle to a firm conclusion being reached and, in view of the identified gaps in disclosure, it is difficult to recommend that the matter be considered as resolved. Once all reasonably available avenues of enquiry have been closed, it may be reasonable to conclude on the most likely hypothesis. However, we are not at that point yet.

331. Relatedly, concerns that any Member State may have about the disclosure of sensitive information are not treated frivolously. I note having been careful to point out to key Member States that modalities may be agreed under which they can describe or communicate records under conditions of confidentiality. No requests for such an arrangement have yet been made, but should not be neglected as a future option.

B. Recommendations

332. Noting the contents of the present report, I propose six recommendations that are mutually compatible.

333. **First, I recommend that the United Nations appoint an independent person to continue the work undertaken pursuant to the current mandate of the Eminent Person.** Despite efforts to exhaust all reasonable lines of enquiry and reach a conclusion about the cause or causes of the tragic event, the enduring fact is that it is almost certain that further relevant information exists. The key obstacle that prevents a conclusion being within reach is the hesitancy of a few key Member States to provide full disclosure. Without an independent person playing a coordinating role and encouraging full disclosure, this inquiry risks losing momentum and institutional

knowledge, and missing the opportunity to arrive at the best available conclusion. To this end, I recommend that an independent person be appointed to continue this work, including by following up on the specific items noted in the present report.

334. Secondly, I recommend that key Member States be urged to designate specific points of contact to work collaboratively on any outstanding queries, including to determine whether relevant information exists in Member States' security, intelligence and defence archives. This may include appointing or reappointing independent and high-ranking officials (independent appointees) and/or other direct contact points in the agencies or departments concerned, with all the necessary independence, access, clearances and resources to facilitate their assignments and expedite searches. In a similar manner to that described in the 2022 report, under the current mandate the preponderance of new information has been identified and provided by individuals rather than Member States. However, on occasion this information needs to be authenticated or verified against government records. As noted, important information almost certainly remains undisclosed by a few key Member States and access to it is necessary to assist in our complete understanding of events. In particular, but without limitation, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States have previously appointed independent appointees without any new and material document being disclosed. In this regard, adopting the framework suggested by South Africa, these and any other relevant Member States may be encouraged to designate specific points of contact in concerned agencies or departments to work collaboratively on any outstanding queries. Any such designates should be afforded all necessary independence, clearances and resources, and their preparation should include being familiarized with a thorough knowledge of current information, including through a review of the reports presented to the General Assembly since the work of the Independent Panel in 2015 (as listed above at section I.C) and being provided with briefings by any independent person appointed by the Secretary-General. The aim of this would be to facilitate their assignments and expedite searches.

335. As noted in the 2022 and present reports, there was a significant presence of foreign intelligence agencies and personnel in the region in 1961. Still, no information has come from the records of these agencies and personnel, despite being a particularly important potential source of information. As previously recommended, each key Member State should be given an opportunity to request that specific information not be publicly disclosed, before the outcome is reported to the Secretary-General. Even if relevant records are identified but not able to be disclosed at the time, the confirmation of such records would nonetheless be a significant contribution to the historical record on the tragic event.

336. Thirdly, I recommend that all Member States be called upon to provide relevant information and ensure comprehensive access to all archives, more than 60 years after the crash. Specific Member States have been the main focus of my requests for further searches, for the reasons outlined in the present report. However, it is important that all Member States remain engaged and renew efforts to search for any relevant information regarding the plane crash, particularly in view of the advances made in the state of our shared knowledge since the work of the Independent Panel concluded in 2015 and the experience gained in the discovery of new information that was co-located in numerous places.

337. Fourthly, I recommend that all Member States be encouraged, as may be appropriate, to make assistance available to the independent person and those voluntarily assisting the independent person, should the work be continued. The work of the Eminent Person has again been significantly advanced by Member States voluntarily making resources, including expertise, available to assist in the specific tasks described in the present report. As noted, it has also again been greatly

advantaged by the vigorous and voluntary efforts of individuals. The emerging trend is that they have been the source of a greater part of new and relevant information. It is my view that Member States should continue to encourage individuals and private entities to disclose any relevant records, and that in a complementary manner Member States should be encouraged to assist individuals who are conducting research to have the greatest practicable degree of access to information.

338. Fifthly, I recommend that any further mandate propose that a conclusion be reached regarding whether Member States have complied with the process outlined by the General Assembly. In the 2022 report, I noted that it was not yet appropriate to conclude whether any inference may be drawn as a result of non- or partial cooperation from certain Member States. Given the nature, purposes and ongoing development of the investigation, the specific matters flagged for further enquiry in the present report, and the efforts that continue to be pursued, it would still not be apposite at the present stage to reach a formal conclusion regarding the consequences or implications of any non- or partial cooperation. However, such a situation gathers significance over time. The consideration of the matter by the General Assembly may provide a framework towards ensuring a specific end point to this process.

339. Sixthly, I recommend that the United Nations continue to work towards making key documents of the Dag Hammarskjöld Investigation publicly available through a dedicated online collection. The United Nations has of its own initiative already created a dedicated online collection on this topic. As a priority going forward, the records and archives of the United Nations that relate to this investigation, including the source material considered by each of the Hammarskjöld Commission, the Independent Panel and the Eminent Person, and other material identified for its importance by the Eminent Person, should be made publicly available in the interest of transparency. Related to my third recommendation, this may be an area where assistance from outside the United Nations may provide additional benefit.

Annex I**Letter dated 9 January 2024 from the Eminent Person addressed to the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations**

I have the honour to refer to previous correspondence, including Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Dr GNM Pandor's letter to me of 3 June 2022 indicating the full support of South Africa regarding the investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death of Secretary-General Hammarskjöld.

This year will mark the 63rd anniversary of the crash of flight SE-BDY, which was carrying the Secretary-General and those accompanying on a mission for peace in the Congo. Despite the passing of over six decades since, the General Assembly, the families of the victims, and the global community remain resolute that no effort should be spared in the full search for the truth of the tragic event. It is in this spirit that I renew my request for your assistance.

Informed by General Assembly resolution 77/252, I am now writing to key Member States to request responses to a number of queries. An annexure is enclosed with this correspondence. I would be very grateful for (a) specific responses to the questions contained in the annexure; and (b) confirmation regarding a list of sources. Regarding the latter request, it is of particular utility to be able to confirm with precision which archives and sources have been reviewed, in order that future searches may be better focused. In this regard, I seek your continuing assistance with clarifying whether the other sources described in (b), as listed in part B of the annexure, have been included or excluded for the purposes of responding to the queries asked.

I reiterate that I would be prepared to discuss any measures regarding the maintenance of confidentiality of information that would give South Africa comfort in its response. I would of course also be glad to provide any further information or documents, should it be of assistance in this task.

In order that I can report to the Secretary-General within the timeframes required of me, I would be grateful for your response to the matters contained in the annexure to this letter by 15 April 2024.

(Signed) Mohamed Chande **Othman**

Annex II**Letter dated 9 January 2024 from the Eminent Person addressed to the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations**

I have the honour to refer to previous correspondence, including your letter to me of 18 July 2022. On receipt of that letter, I expressed my appreciation for your efforts in requesting searches for information regarding the circumstances surrounding the death of Secretary-General Hammarskjöld. I remain grateful for your continuing assistance.

This year will mark the 63rd anniversary of the crash of flight SE-BDY, which was carrying the Secretary-General and those accompanying on a mission for peace in the Congo. Despite the passing of over six decades since, the General Assembly, the families of the victims, and the global community remain resolute that no effort should be spared in the full search for the truth of the tragic event. It is in this spirit that I renew my request for your assistance.

Informed by General Assembly resolution 77/252, I am now writing to key Member States to request responses to a number of queries. An annexure is enclosed with this correspondence. I would be very grateful for (a) specific responses to the questions contained in the annexure; and (b) confirmation regarding a list of sources. Regarding the latter request, it is of particular utility to be able to confirm with precision which archives and sources have been reviewed, in order that future searches may be better focused. In this regard, I was assisted by your previous confirmation that the archives of the 1961 records of the Foreign Office Permanent Under-Secretary's department had been searched. I seek your continuing assistance with clarifying whether the other sources described in (b), as listed in part B of the annexure, have been included or excluded for the purposes of responding to the queries asked.

I reiterate that I would be prepared to discuss any measures regarding the maintenance of confidentiality of information that would give the United Kingdom comfort in its response. I would of course also be glad to provide any further information or documents, should it be of assistance in this task.

In order that I can report to the Secretary-General within the timeframes required of me, I would be grateful for your response to the matters contained in the annexure to this letter by 15 April 2024.

(Signed) Mohamed Chande **Othman**

Annex III**Letter dated 9 January 2024 from the Eminent Person addressed to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs of the United States of America**

I have the honour to refer to previous correspondence, including your letters to me of 6 October 2023 (undated but received on that date), and 28 July 2022. I express my continuing gratitude for your outreach efforts to relevant United States agencies and for requesting that they conduct searches for information regarding the circumstances surrounding the death of Secretary-General Hammarskjöld.

This year will mark the 63rd anniversary of the crash of flight SE-BDY, which was carrying the Secretary-General and those accompanying on a mission for peace in the Congo. Despite the passing of over six decades since, the General Assembly, the families of the victims, and the global community remain resolute that no effort should be spared in the full search for the truth of the tragic event. It is in this spirit that I renew my request for your assistance.

Informed by General Assembly resolution 77/252, I am now writing to key Member States to request responses to a number of queries. An annexure is enclosed with this correspondence. I would be very grateful for (a) specific responses to the questions contained in the annexure; and (b) confirmation of whether the sources listed in the annexure have been included or excluded for the purposes of responding to the queries asked.

I reiterate that I would be prepared to discuss any measures regarding the maintenance of confidentiality of information that would give the United States comfort in its response. I would of course also be glad to provide any further information or documents, should it be of assistance in this task.

In order that I can report to the Secretary-General within the timeframes required of me, I would be grateful for your response to the matters contained in the annexure to this letter by 15 April 2024.

(Signed) Mohamed Chande **Othman**

Annex IV

Letter dated 13 May 2024 from the Director-General of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa addressed to the Eminent Person

Your letter of 9 January 2024 refers. South Africa has received the United Nations' request for South Africa to provide:

- a) specific responses to the questions contained in the annexures of your letter; and
- b) confirmation regarding a list of sources.

Please note that South Africa remains seized with the matter and continues to work within its government departments, to follow-up on your request.

I wish to reiterate South Africa's support for, and cooperation with the UN on this matter, as well as efforts in contributing to this investigation. I would be grateful for the contact details for your team which DIRCO could transmit to the various Departments within the South African government to liaise with you and your team directly. Likewise, we hope to provide you with a contact list shortly, which will assist you in your investigations.

It would be appreciated if the correspondence from your department could be shared with 



(Signed) Z. Dangor

Annex V**Letter dated 15 April 2024 from the Head of the United Nations and Multilateral Department of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland addressed to the Eminent Person**

Thank you for your letter dated 9 January 2024. We welcome and support efforts to understand the circumstances surrounding the tragic death of UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld and his party in 1961.

To this end we have, on multiple occasions, undertaken extensive searches of our archives across all relevant UK departments at the behest of the UN Inquiry and then shared the outcomes with you. In order to provide reassurance of the United Kingdom's full co-operation with the Inquiry, we previously appointed an independent reviewer, Mr Graham Hand.

With regards the points in your Annexure, I note that previous correspondence, including between you and Mr Hand as well as our letter to you of 18 July 2022, already address some of these matters at length. In respect of your request for a full list of records, our firm assessment (independently confirmed by Mr Hand) remains that all information of value to the Inquiry has already been provided to the Inquiry itself or has been released to The National Archives at Kew and is available to the public there.

(Signed) Phil **Dixon**

Annex VI

Letter dated 13 March 2024 from the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, International Organization Affairs, of the United States of America addressed to the Eminent Person

Thank you for your letter of January 25, 2024, regarding the investigation into the death of Dag Hammarskjöld. The United States has cooperated extensively with the Independent Panel of Experts. It has been my great pleasure to continue that cooperation with you since your appointment as Eminent Person.

I am not aware of any additional information pertaining to the specific questions in your request, but I will reconfirm with relevant agencies.

(Signed) David **McFarland**
