

**CLOVIS MWAMBA, Dag Hammarskjöld-West Papua tree-planting ceremony  
Federal Republic of West Papua, 838 Collins St, Docklands 3008**

Secretary-General Hammarskjöld never promised 'Heaven on earth' but he did his best to 'save humanity from hell.'

My wealthy country, the Congo, became independent in June 1960. Belgium, our former colonial power, didn't make the process easy, and seven months later our first Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba, was brutally assassinated. Fifteen months later, during the Secretary-General's visit to help quell a secession movement on our border with British Northern Rhodesia, his aeroplane was blown up and he and fifteen UN staff were killed.

The unrest, and the assassination of both our Pan-African Prime Minister and the UN self-determination warrior, were manipulated and fuelled by the ambition and greed of western economic powers. In the Congo the losses is still resonating. We've been engulfed in proxy-wars and military invasions, and, to our shame, had a reputation as the "world capital of rape". On the other side of the world, western political realism also wrecked the West Papuans independence program that the Secretary-General had prepared, and they too, have paid, and are still paying, an extremely heavy price.

Today, in the Congo, I am pleased to say that the non-violent weapons of politics and diplomacy have at last triumphed over the brutal military dictatorship that brought about the death of more than ten million Congolese lives, just in one decade.

This is thanks to the *know-how* of our current democratically elected president, Félix Antoine Tshilombo Tshisekedi. President Tshisekedi managed a peaceful transfer of power and prevented our country from being an *eternal* hell. Now the Congolese are smiling, anticipating the peace they've so longed for. It should be noted that during Tshisekedi's first visit to the USA he made a memorable tribute in front of President John F. Kennedy's grave.

As a peaceful Freedom-fighter, I stand here today holding a white kaolin in the name of the Congolese emblems of peace, the "Okapi" and the "Baluba" sacred tree we call "Mwabi" to commemorate Dag Hammarskjöld, who was a true Ancestor of peace-building in the world and especially in the Congo.

The term 'ancestor' is inseparable from a promise to integrate those who were before with those yet to come; the past with the future. It is the ancestors who fuel this cycle of life. For us, the living-dead is a person who is physically dead but alive in the spirit world and very much in the memory of those who knew him. We Congolese remember Dag Hammarskjöld by name. As the famous African John Mbiti said "As long as a living-dead is thus remembered, he is in the state of personal immortality".

A tree, like we are planting today, is highly valued by sub-saharan Africans because of its dense significance and rich symbolism in the Cycle of life – whether in Ancestry, Childhood, Adulthood, or Old Age.