

# Speeches, statements and press conference by Dag Hammarskjöld concerning Mi...

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Statement by D.H. on Suez Canal Clearance.

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18 December 1956

STATEMENT BY SECRETARY-GENERAL ON SUEZ CANAL CLEARANCE

In the report to the General Assembly on the Canal clearing it was stated that the Secretary-General, in case the General Assembly approved that the United Nations should assist in the clearing of the Canal, would negotiate the necessary arrangements with such private firms as might speedily and effectively undertake the task and intended to address himself to firms in countries outside the present conflict. The proposals by the Secretary-General were approved by the General Assembly. It follows that the General Assembly has given priority to the use of resources from private firms from countries outside the conflict.

Negotiations conducted by Lt. General Wheeler, whose great experience and competence in this field is generally recognized, have led to the building up of a United Nations salvage fleet, able to begin operations immediately and expeditiously. General Wheeler is working in close contact with Headquarters and on the basis of instructions issued in strict conformity with the position of the United Nations.

The Secretary-General trusts that all parties will cooperate with the United Nations so as to facilitate the vital task entrusted to the Organization. In due time a full report will be given on the arrangements made. The Secretary-General believes that this report will allay doubts which recently have been expressed in some quarters.

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STATEMENT

Draft  
17 December 1956

In the report to the General Assembly on the Canal clearing it was stated that the Secretary-General, in case the General Assembly approved that the United Nations should assist in the clearing of the Canal, would negotiate the necessary arrangements with such private firms as might speedily and effectively undertake the task and intended to address himself to firms in countries outside the present conflict. The proposals by the Secretary-General were approved by the General Assembly. It follows that the General Assembly has given priority to the use of resources from private firms from countries outside the conflict. The question of participation by the Anglo/French resources in the operation was touched upon by Mr. Selwyn Lloyd in the debate on the report. He stated that the United Kingdom was ready to lend its resources "to work in any way wanted in this task".

Negotiations conducted by Lt. General Wheeler and his associates have led to the building up of a United Nations salvage fleet of high competence able to begin operations immediately and expeditiously. However, in the planning it was considered to be desirable to add to the United Nations salvage fleet a maximum of 6 ships, which are specifically adapted to the lifting tasks facing the salvage fleet in the first phase of the operation. The Secretary-General has accordingly asked the British authorities to put these 6 ships at the disposal of the United Nations. He has also made proposals for assistance in initial handover to the United Nations crews which would be employed on these ships. These proposals were made early last week.

At the same time, the Secretary-General further asked that the British and French ships now actively engaged in lifting operations in Port Said should complete their task, which in the majority of the cases should be possible within the course of this week. The operation would be followed up with the present crews. The request

covers specifically the use of three ships for a somewhat longer period in Fort Said with the crews at present engaged in one of the lifting operations. The United Nations would obviously take responsibility for the security aspect of this operation after the withdrawal of Anglo-French troops.

As to the 6 ships requested, a security problem arises which is of a different nature. It is felt that at this early stage the use of British crews to a total number of about 160 down the Canal might present security problems which should not be accepted unless practical considerations make it unavoidable. However, the loss of time if United Nations crews of other nationalities were used on the ships is likely to be very small. In case, short of the use of British crews, the ships were not made available by the British authorities, the loss of time for the total operation might be a matter of a few weeks.

The Secretary-General trusts that all parties will co-operate with the United Nations so as to facilitate the vital task entrusted to the Organisation.